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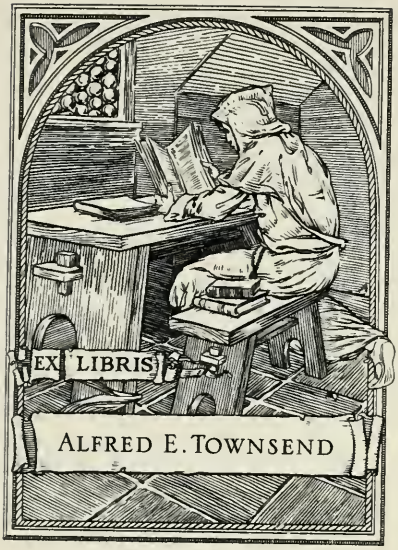


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# The Works of Eugene Sue

ILLUSTRATED
WITH
ORIGINAL ETCHINGS

*In Twenty Volumes*

*Volume XII.*

PUBLISHED BY
FRANCIS A. NICCOLLS & CO.
LONDON AND BOSTON

Annecy Edition

*Limited to 1000 copies*

*of which this is*

*No.* 180

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# Part XI. — Continued

# THE CHOLERA

# THE WANDERING JEW.

## CHAPTER I.

### AGRICOLA BAUDOIN.

The Père d'Aigrigny could scarcely repress his spite and rage, and cast not only angry and threatening looks at Agricola, but from time to time glanced with unquiet and irritated eye at the entrance of the door, as if he feared at each moment to see some other person enter whose coming he equally dreaded.

The smith, as soon as he saw the countenance of his master, retreated, struck with painful surprise at the sight of M. Hardy's features, so sad, so grief-worn. For some seconds the three actors in this scene kept silence. Agricola had no longer any doubt as to the moral weakening of M. Hardy, accustomed as the artisan was to see as much high spirit as kindness of heart in the worthy man.

D'Aigrigny first broke silence, saying to the boarder, and laying decided emphasis on each word:

"I should suppose, my dear son, that after the desire so positive, so spontaneous, which you have just manifested to me, not to see this gentleman, — I should suppose, I say, that his presence now is painful to you; and I trust, therefore, that out of deference, or at least grati-

tude, to you, this gentleman," and he looked towards the smith, "will at once retire, and terminate this unpleasant situation, already too much prolonged."

Agricola made no reply to Père d'Aigrigny, but, turning his back to him, addressed M. Hardy, whom he gazed at for some moments with profound emotion, whilst the big tears fell from his eyes:

"Ah, monsieur, it does me good to see you, although you appear to be suffering so much! How my heart grows calm, is reassured, rejoices; my comrades would be so happy to be in my place. If you but knew all they have said to me about you; for to cherish, venerate you, we all have but one soul, one feeling."

D'Aigrigny gave Hardy a glance which meant—What did I tell you? Then addressing Agricola impatiently, as he went up close to him:

"I have already told you that your presence here is intrusive."

Agricola made no reply, did not even turn towards him, but said:

"M. Hardy, have the goodness to desire this person to leave the room. My father and I know him, as he knows full well."

Then turning around towards the reverend father, the smith added, scornfully, and measuring him from head to foot with a look of indignation mingled with disgust:

"If you have any desire to hear what I have to say to M. Hardy about you, return here by and by; but at present I wish to speak to my late employer on private business, and give him a letter from Mlle. de Cardoville, who knows you also, unfortunately for her."

The Jesuit remained unmoved, and replied:

"I will allow myself, sir, to think you somewhat invert our positions. I am here in my own house, where I have the honour to receive M. Hardy. It is I, therefore, who have the right and power to compel you to quit this place instantly, and—"

"Father, pray," said M. Hardy, with deference, "excuse Agricola; his attachment to me urges him somewhat too far; but as he is here, and has private matters to communicate to me, allow me, father, to converse with him for a little while."

"Allow you, my dear son?" replied D'Aigrigny, pretending surprise, "why ask permission? Are you not perfectly free to do what you think best? Was it not you who just now, and in spite of my observations begging you to receive this individual, formally and decidedly refused to grant him the interview?"

"Quite true, father."

After these words, D'Aigrigny could no longer resist without want of tact, and he rose, therefore, and, squeezing Hardy by the hand, said to him, with an expressive gesture:

"Adieu, for the present, my dear son, but remember our recent conversation, and what I foretold."

"Adieu, for the present, father; make your mind easy," replied M. Hardy, in a melancholy tone.

The reverend father left the room. Agricola, overcome, amazed, asked himself if it were indeed his former master whom he heard calling the Père d'Aigrigny father with so much deference and humility. Then as the smith scrutinised the features of M. Hardy more attentively, he remarked in his wasted countenance an expression of exhaustion and lassitude, which equally alarmed and affected him, and he therefore said to him, whilst endeavouring to conceal his painful surprise:

"At length, sir, you will be restored to us; we shall then soon see you in the midst of us! Ah, your return will make many very happy, relieve much uneasiness; for, if it were possible, we have loved you still more since we were afraid for an instant that we should lose you."

"Honest, worthy fellow!" replied M. Hardy, with a benevolent but melancholy smile, and holding out

his hand to Agricola, "I never for a moment doubted you or your comrades; their gratitude has always repaid me for the good I was enabled to do them."

"And which you will do them again, sir, — for you — "

Here M. Hardy interrupted Agricola by exclaiming:

"Before we continue this observation, my worthy young friend, you must allow me to speak with perfect frankness, so as to prevent yourself or your companions from entertaining hopes that can never be realised. My resolution is irrevocably taken to pass the remainder of my days if not within the walls of a cloister, at least in absolute retirement; for my soul sickens and is weary — oh, how weary of this life!"

"But we are not weary of honouring and cherishing the warmest affection for you, my beloved master!" exclaimed the smith, more and more alarmed by the tone and language of M. Hardy. "It is now our turn to devote ourselves to you, and to prove our sincerity by our zeal, our disinterested services, and our unanimous and energetic aid, in rebuilding the manufactory, — that monument of your generous goodness and noble desire to befriend your fellow creatures."

M. Hardy mournfully shook his head.

"No," said he, "I repeat that the activity of life has ceased for me; I seem, during the last few weeks, to have grown at least twenty years older, and I have neither the strength, the courage, nor even the inclination, to recommence my past career. Thank God, while I was able I did what I could for the interests of humanity. I have discharged my debt of social duty, and at this moment I have but one wish, one desire, and that is, to obtain peace and tranquillity from the consolations of religion."

"And can you possibly, sir," inquired Agricola, with utter amazement at these words, "can you prefer living in this gloomy solitude to being among your own faithful

and attached people? Do you believe you should find greater happiness here, amid these priests, than in your manufactory raised from its present ruins, and become more flourishing than ever?"

"Happiness and I have for ever parted company upon this earth," replied M. Hardy, bitterly.

After a momentary hesitation, Agricola quickly resumed, in an agitated and unsteady voice:

"My honoured master, you are basely deceived, cheated, duped!"

"What mean you, my friend?"

"I mean, M. Hardy, that the priests who surround you are false and treacherous, and that they have the blackest designs upon you. Oh, master, dear master, you little know the wicked hands you have fallen into! Are you aware with whom you are living?"

"Yes, with good and holy men, belonging to the Company of Jesus."

"And your mortal enemies!"

"Enemies?" cried M. Hardy, with a faint smile of mournful impatience, "what have I to fear further from the enmity of my most implacable foes? Where could they find the means of inflicting any fresh wound?"

"But, monsieur," exclaimed the smith, "it is not personal danger you need fear from the machinations of these religious hypocrites. Their motive consists in endeavouring to dispossess you of your share in an immense inheritance, and they have laid their plans with consummate villainy. Not only yourself, but the daughters of Maréchal Simon, Mlle. de Cardoville, and my adopted brother, Gabriel,—in a word, all belonging to your family have narrowly escaped becoming victims to their infernal schemes. I tell you, these priests have no other aim than to abuse your confidence, and that now their sole motive in causing you to be transported hither half dying as you were, and the reason why they wish to keep all your faithful friends from seeing you—"

And M. Hardy again broke in upon Agricola's discourse:

"My worthy young friend," said he, with a smile of gloomy indifference, "you are in error as to these pious priests, whose care and attention to me have been unceasingly great; and as to this pretended inheritance, what are all the riches of the world to me? Oh, no, henceforward the vain treasures of this valley of grief and tears have no charms, no temptations for me. I bow my spirit to the dust, humbly trusting that my severe sufferings may be acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and plead in my favour, that I may as quickly as possible be removed from the scene of my painful pilgrimage."

"Alas, dear master," urged Agricola, unable to believe the reality of what he heard, "you cannot be thus changed in so short a time! You, to adopt such despairing sentiments, who ever bade us love and admire the inexhaustible goodness of our Heavenly Father; and well might we believe in the bounty, and love, and mercy you spoke of, for had not that beneficent Protector and ever watchful Guardian sent you to dwell among us?"

"And the greater is it my duty to resign myself to his will, since he has thought proper to withdraw me from you, my friends; doubtless because, spite of my wish to serve him aright, I have failed in so doing. I fear me much I have worshipped and loved the creature more than the Creator."

"And how, dear master," cried the smith, into whose heart fresh apprehensions as regarded the state of M. Hardy's mind were rapidly gaining ground, "could you better serve and honour God than by encouraging industry and honesty; rendering men better by securing their welfare; treating your dependants as men and brothers, by cultivating their understanding, and giving them a taste for virtue and real love for goodness; by propagating among them, by your example, senti-

ments of equality, brotherhood, and to share all things in common with a heavenly spirit. Ah, master, you need but to remember the good you have done, — the daily blessings breathed for you by the small world of whom you were the sun, that bestowed the life and light of happiness and content, to find consolation for the past and hope for the future!"

"Why recall the past?" replied M. Hardy, gently. "Had my humble deeds been acceptable in the sight of God, would he have punished me thus? Far from rejoicing in or vaunting of what I have done, I ought, rather, to lament and bewail in sackcloth and ashes; for I much fear I walked in darkness and error, and had wandered from his sacred fold; perhaps I was led to think my path a right one, and allowed myself to be blinded by my foolish pride. I, a poor, unworthy worm, to presume to differ from the many great and clever men who have humbly bowed themselves in submission to the strict forms I dared to consider unnecessary. Ah, now I feel my crime! I am conscious of my sin, and, with tears and prayers, in solitude and mortifications, will I endeavour to wash away my fault. Yes, I will humbly trust that an avenging God will yet one day grant me his pardon, and that my bitter sufferings may even be accepted in favour of other sinners great as myself."

Agricola found not one word to reply, but contemplated M. Hardy with mute alarm, as he continued to pour forth these melancholy, though hackneyed expressions, in a feeble and tremulous tone; and as he examined the dejected, careworn countenance of the man once so animated and energetic, he asked himself, with secret dread, what could be the mysterious influence, the fascination possessed by these priests, by which they were enabled to turn the sorrows and mental exhaustion of this unfortunate individual to their own purpose, and to dry and parch up one of the finest, noblest hearts that ever beat in human breast; to render barren and unpro-

ductive a beneficence that knew no bounds, and to annihilate a mind the most enlightened that had ever devoted itself to the happiness of the human race.

So great was the chagrin and astonishment of the smith, that he felt neither strength nor courage to continue the conversation, which became so much the more afflicting to him as at each fresh word and look from M. Hardy he saw more clearly revealed the depth of the abyss of incurable desolation into which the reverend fathers had plunged his unhappy patron.

M. Hardy, meanwhile, preserved a gloomy silence; he had fallen back into his original apathy and listless manner, while his eyes wandered to the various maxims inscribed on the walls relative to the "Imitation."

At length, Agricola broke the dead silence which prevailed, and drawing from his pocket the letter of Mlle. de Cardoville, which now formed his only hope, he presented it to M. Hardy, saying:

"Monsieur, a relation, at present unknown to you, except by name, which you have doubtless heard, has desired me to give you this letter."

"And what good can that letter do me, or indeed any one, my young friend?"

"Nay, master, I beseech of you to read it. Mlle. de Cardoville eagerly expects your reply. It refers to most important matters."

"My friend," replied M. Hardy, raising towards heaven his eyes red and swollen with weeping, "I know but of one important matter, and it is there!" pointing upwards.

"M. Hardy," continued the smith, more and more affected, "I beseech you, in the name of our united gratitude towards you, in that of the prayers we will teach our children night and morning to offer for your return to health and happiness, to read this letter. Yes, master, dear, dear master, I implore of you to read it; and if, after that, your mind continues unchanged,

why — then — why then — I will urge you no more; all will be at an end for us poor workmen; we shall have lost our benefactor for ever; he who treated us like brothers, and cherished us like friends; whose good example would, sooner or later, have been followed by others having hearts as noble and generous as his own, so that, by your intervention, by degrees our working brethren would have shared our blessings, and have had to bless your name as we did. But it matters not! To us, your faithful, your devoted workmen, your memory will be our most sacred treasure, and never will your name escape our lips but with love and respect, mingled with a grief that will not be consoled, for how can we forget that we have lost you?"

The voice of Agricola, which had been greatly interrupted by his rising emotions, was here lost amid the sighs and tears which, spite of his firm and manly character, he found it impossible to repress.

"Excuse my weakness, dearest master," said he, "but my tears fall not for myself alone. No, no, my heart bleeds when I think of those that will long be shed by brave and worthy men, as they mournfully repeat, 'We shall see our M. Hardy no more,—never — never again.'"

The emotion and tone of Agricola were so natural and unfeigned, his frank and noble countenance, bathed in tears, expressed so deep, so touching a devotion, that M. Hardy, for the first time during his abode among the reverend fathers, felt a something like warmth rekindle around his heart, as though some revivifying sunbeam had at length managed to pierce through the thick, icy covering beneath which he had so long vegetated.

M. Hardy held out his hand to Agricola, and said to him, in an altered voice:

"Thanks, my good friend, thanks. This fresh proof of your devotion, these regrets, all move me; and a gentle emotion, unembittered, does me good."

"Ah, sir," exclaimed the smith, with a glimmer of hope, "do not restrain yourself; listen to the voice of your heart; it will tell you to make the happiness of those who cherish you, and for you to see people happy is to be happy. Now, read this letter from the generous young lady; it may, perhaps, finish what I have begun, and if it does not, then we shall see."

So saying, Agricola paused, and cast a glance of hope towards the door; then he added, again presenting the letter to M. Hardy:

"Oh, sir, read, I entreat you; Mlle. de Cardoville has desired me to confirm to you all there is in the letter."

"No, no, I must not — I ought not to read it," replied Hardy, with hesitation. "Of what use would it be but to revive my regrets? For, alas! it is true I loved you all so much, I had formed so many projects for the future," added poor Hardy, with involuntary emotion; then struggling against the feeling, he continued, "But wherefore think of this? The past can never return."

"Who knows, M. Hardy, who knows?" observed Agricola, more and more satisfied at the doubt of his old master; "first read Mlle. de Cardoville's letter."

Hardy, yielding to Agricola's persuasion, took the letter almost in spite of himself, broke the seal, and read it; gradually his countenance expressed in turns gratitude and admiration. Several times he interrupted himself to say to Agricola, with a warmth of feeling which seemed to astonish even himself:

"Oh, how good, how admirable!"

Then having concluded the perusal of the letter, Hardy, addressing the smith, said, with a melancholy sigh:

"What a heart is Mlle. de Cardoville's! What kindness! What a mind! What elevation of mind! Ah, I shall never forget the noble feelings that have dictated her generous offers to me. May she at least be happy in this sad, sad world!"

"Ah, believe me, sir," replied Agricola, with excitement, "a world which comprises such creatures, and so many others beside, who, without having the inestimable worth of this excellent young lady, are yet worthy of the attachment of honest people, — such a world is something more than dirt, corruption, and wickedness, and proves, on the contrary, in favour of humanity. It is such a world that summons, awaits you. Come, M. Hardy, listen to the advice of Mlle. de Cardoville, accept the offers which she makes you; return to us; return to life; for it is death in this house!"

"Return to a world wherein I have suffered so much? Quit the calm of this retreat?" answered Hardy, with hesitation. "No, no, I cannot — I ought not."

"Ah, I have not relied on myself alone to decide you," cried the smith, with increasing hope, "I have there a powerful auxiliary" — he pointed to the door — "whom I have kept to strike the great blow, and who will appear when you please."

"What mean you, my friend?" inquired Hardy.

"Ah, it was another excellent idea of Mlle. de Cardoville, who always thinks rightly, knowing the dangerous hands into which you had fallen. Knowing, also, the perfidious cunning of those persons who desire to inveigle you, she said to me, 'M. Agricola, the disposition of M. Hardy is so frank and good that perhaps he will easily allow his mind to be abused, for honest hearts always refuse to believe in unworthy trickeries; then he may suppose that you are interested in having him accept the offers I make to him; but there is an individual whose sacred character ought under such circumstances to inspire M. Hardy with entire confidence; for this admirable priest is our relation, and was very nearly also a victim to the implacable enemies of our family.'"

"And this priest, who is he?" inquired Hardy.

"The Abbé Gabriel Rennepont, my adopted brother," cried the smith, with pride. "He is a noble priest!

Ah, sir, if you had known him earlier, instead of despairing, you would have hoped. Your grief would not have resisted his consolations."

"Who is this priest? Where is he?" inquired Hardy, equally surprised and curious.

"There — in your antechamber. When Père d'Aigrigny saw him with me, he became furious, and ordered us to go away; but my worthy, dear Gabriel replied that he might have to converse with you on very important interests, and that therefore he should stay. I, less patient, gave the Abbé d'Aigrigny, who sought to stop my progress, a push, and rushed by him, so anxious was I to see you. Now, sir, then you will receive Gabriel, will you not? He would not come in without your permission; I will now fetch him. You talk of religion; why, it is his that is the real one, for it does good, — it encourages, consoles, you will see, and then, at last, thanks to Mlle. de Cardoville and him, you will be restored to us!" exclaimed the smith, unable any longer to repress his joyful hope.

"No, my friend, no! I don't know. I am afraid," replied Hardy, with increasing hesitation, yet feeling, in spite of himself, aroused, animated, excited, by the cordial language of the smith. The latter, taking advantage of the propitious hesitation of his old master, ran to the door, opened it, and exclaimed:

"Gabriel, my brother, dear brother, come, come; M. Hardy wishes to see you."

"My friend," observed Hardy, still hesitating, but nevertheless seeming quite satisfied to have his hesitation taken advantage of, "my friend, what are you doing?"

"I am calling your preserver and our own!" replied Agricola, overjoyed, and certain of the good success of Gabriel's intervention with M. Hardy.

Appearing at the call of the smith, Gabriel quickly entered M. Hardy's apartment.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE HIDING-PLACE.

We have said that in certain parts of most of the apartments occupied by the boarders of the reverend fathers certain spy-holes were formed, with the intention of giving every facility to the incessant espionage with which the Company environed those they desired to watch; and M. Hardy being one of these, there had been contrived, adjacent to his apartment, a secret hiding-place which could hold two persons. A kind of long funnel aired and lighted up this closet, in which was a speaking-pipe, arranged with so much skill that the least whisper in the adjacent room was heard in this retreat as distinctly as possible; and several round holes, cleverly contrived, and masked in different places, allowed all that went on in the adjacent chamber to be seen.

Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin were now in this hiding-place.

Immediately after the resolute entrance of Agricola and the firm answer of Gabriel, who declared his determination to speak to M. Hardy if he would allow him, D'Aigrigny, not desirous of having any disturbance to preclude the interview of M. Hardy with the smith and the young missionary, — an interview whose consequences might be so fatal for the Company, — went to consult Rodin.

Rodin, during his remarkable and rapid convalescence, resided in the adjacent limits reserved for the reverend fathers. He saw at once the deep importance of his position, whilst he recognised at the same time how ably

D'Aigrigny had followed out his instructions relative to the means by which the interview with Agricola and Hardy was to be prevented, — a manœuvre which would have resulted successfully but for the sudden arrival of the smith. Rodin, desirous of seeing, hearing, judging, and acting for himself, went instantly to ensconce himself in the secret closet in question with D'Aigrigny, after having hastily despatched an emissary to the palace of the Archbishop of Paris; for what purpose, we shall hereafter discover.

The two reverends arrived at the cabinet about the middle of Agricola and Hardy's conversation.

The reverend fathers, at first confident in the gloomy apathy in which Hardy was plunged, from which the generous urging of the smith was unable to draw him, saw the coming danger as it gradually approached, and it became more menacing from the moment when M. Hardy, shaken by the arguments of the smith, consented to receive the letter of Mlle. de Cardoville, until the moment when Agricola called in Gabriel in order to give the final blow to the hesitation of his old master.

Rodin, by the inexhaustible energy of his character, which had given him strength to support the terrible and most agonising operation of Doctor Baleinier, was now out of danger; he had nearly recovered his health, but still his reduced frame was beyond idea. The light, falling from over his head, and directly upon his yellow and shining cranium, his projecting cheek-bones, and angular nose, shone brightly on these prominent features, whilst the rest of his face was furrowed with dark and opaque shadows.

He was the living image of one of those ascetic monks of the Spanish school, — those gloomy portraitures where we see, under some dark brown, half fallen cowl, a skull, the colour of old ivory, with livid cheek-bones, an eye almost extinct in its deep orbit, whilst the rest of the features disappear in the obscure shadow through which

we can scarcely distinguish a human form, kneeling and wrapped in a gown, with a hempen girdle.

This resemblance was the more striking, as Rodin, coming hastily from his chamber, had on his long black woollen dressing-gown, and still more, as being very sensitive of the cold, he had thrown over his shoulders a short cloak of black cloth, with a hood, to protect himself from the northern blast.

D'Aigrigny, not finding room exactly beneath the light which came into the hiding-place, remained in the dimmer shade.

At this moment when we present the two Jesuits to the reader, Agricola had left the chamber to summon Gabriel, and introduce him to his former employer.

Père d'Aigrigny, looking at Rodin with deep and savage anguish, said to him in a low tone:

"But for Mlle. de Cardoville's letter, the persuasions of the smith would have been vain. This accursed girl will, at all times and in all places, be the obstacle against which our plans will be wrecked! Do what we would, still you see she is reconciled to the Indian; and if now the Abbé Gabriel comes to effect his purpose, and by his intervention M. Hardy escapes us, what is to be done? What is to be done? Ah, father, our future is nothing but despair!"

"No;" replied Rodin, dryly, "if there is no delay at the archbishop's palace in executing my orders."

"And in that case?"

"I will still be answerable for all; but I must have the papers in question in less than half an hour."

"They must be ready and signed these two or three days past, for by your command I wrote the very day of your operation of the *moxas* — and —"

Rodin, instead of continuing this conversation, fixed his eye at one of the holes, whence he could see into the apartment, and then motioned with his hand for D'Aigrigny to be silent.

## CHAPTER III.

### A CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

At this moment Rodin saw Agricola return to Hardy's chamber, leading Gabriel by the hand.

The presence of these two young men, one with his manly, open countenance, and the other with his angelic beauty, offered so striking a contrast to the hypocritical countenances of those persons by whom Hardy was usually environed, that, already aroused by the animated language of the artisan, it seemed as though his heart, so long in a state of collapse, dilated beneath a salutary influence.

Gabriel, although he had never seen M. Hardy, was struck with the extreme languor of his looks, and recognised at once in those suffering, dejected features the fatal stamp of that enervating subjection, that moral emasculation with which the victims of the Company of Jesus are always branded, when they are not fortunately delivered in time from their homicidal influence.

Rodin, with his eye at the hole, and D'Aigrigny, with his ear on the listen, did not lose a word of the following conversation at which they were present, though unseen.

"Here he is, my dear good brother. Sir," said Agricola to M. Hardy, presenting Gabriel to him, "here he is, sir, the loveliest of the priests. Listen to him, and you will again feel hope and happiness spring up, and you will be restored to us. Listen to him, and you will see how he will unmask the cheats who deceive you by

false appearances of religion. Yes, yes, he will unmask them, for he himself has also been a victim to these wretches, — have you not, Gabriel?"

The young missionary made a gesture with his hand to moderate the smith's excitement, and said to M. Hardy, in his soft and thrilling voice:

"If, under the painful circumstances in which you are placed, sir, the aid of one of your brothers in Jesus Christ can be useful to you, I am at your service; and let me assure you, at the same time, that I am already most respectfully attached to you."

"To me, Monsieur l'Abbé?" said M. Hardy.

"I am aware, sir," replied Gabriel, "of all your kindness to my adopted brother — of your gracious generosity to your work-people. They cherish, they venerate you, sir; and may the consciousness of their gratitude, the conviction of having been pleasing to God, whose eternal goodness rejoices in all that is good, be your recompense for the good you have done, and your encouragement for the good which you will still do."

"Thank you, thank you, M. l'Abbé," replied Hardy, touched by language so different from that of D'Aigrigny; "in the sorrow into which I am plunged, it is delightful to the heart to hear language so consolatory spoken to me; and, I confess," added M. Hardy, with a pensive air, "that the loftiness, the gravity of your character give great weight to your words."

"I was afraid of this," said D'Aigrigny, in a low voice, to Rodin, who still remained at his hole, with his eye glaring, and his ear listening; "this Gabriel will do everything to rouse M. Hardy from his apathy, and lead him again to active life."

"I am not afraid of this," replied Rodin, in his short and sharp tone. "M. Hardy may, perhaps, forget himself for a moment, but, when he tries to walk, he will plainly see that his legs will give way under him."

"What, then, is it that your reverence fears?"

"The delay of our reverend father of the archbishopric."

"But what do you hope from him?"

Rodin, whose attention was again attracted, made another sign to D'Aigrigny, who was instantly mute.

A silence of some moments had succeeded to the commencement of Gabriel and Hardy's conversation, the latter being absorbed by the reflections to which Gabriel's language had given birth.

During this momentary pause, Agricola had, mechanically, cast his eyes over some of the lugubrious sentences with which the walls of Hardy's chamber were as it were hung. Suddenly seizing Gabriel by the arm, he exclaimed, with an expressive gesture:

"Oh, my brother, read those maxims — you will understand all! What man, remaining utterly in solitude, with such desolating thoughts, but must sink into the depths of despair — even, perhaps, to suicide? Ah, it is horrible, infamous!" added the artisan, with indignation; "it is moral murder!"

"You are young, my friend!" replied M. Hardy, shaking his head sadly. "You have always been happy, have never experienced any deception. These maxims may seem deceiving to you; but, alas! to me, and to the majority of mankind, they are but too true. Here, below, all is nothing, misery, grief, for man is born to suffer! Is it not true, M. l'Abbé?" he added, addressing Gabriel.

Gabriel had also cast his eyes over the different texts to which the smith directed his attention, and the young priest could not repress a smile of scorn when he remembered the hateful calculation which had dictated the choice of these reflections, and he then answered Hardy, in a voice much agitated:

"No, no, sir! All is not nothing, lies, misery, deception, vanity, here below. No! Man is not born only to suffer. No! God, whose supreme essence is paternal

kindness, has no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, whom he made to be loving and happy in this world."

"Do you hear, M. Hardy? Do you hear?" cried the the smith. "He is also a priest, but a true, a sublime priest; and he does not speak like those others."

"Alas! and yet, M. l'Abbé," said M. Hardy, "these maxims, mournful as they are, are extracted from a book which is almost placed on an equality with the inspired volume."

"That book, sir," said Gabriel, "may be abused like every human production! Written to restrain poor monks, in renouncement of the world, in isolation, in the blind obedience of an inactive, barren life,—this book, in preaching the detaching oneself from everything, contempt and self-mistrust of our fellows, an overwhelming servility, aimed at persuading these unfortunate monks that the tortures imposed on them in this life—a life utterly opposed to the eternal views of God for mankind—would be acceptable to the Lord."

"Ah, this book appears to me, thus explained, even still more alarming," said M. Hardy.

"Blasphemy! Impiety!" continued Gabriel, unable to repress his indignation. "To dare to sanctify idleness, isolation, mistrust of everything, when there is nothing divine in the world but the holy labour, the holy love of one's brethren, holy communion with them! Sacrilege! To dare to say that the Father of boundless, immense goodness rejoices in the miseries of his creatures. He, He, just Heaven! He, who has no sufferings but those of his children, he, who has no wish but that of their happiness, he, who has gloriously endowed them with all the treasures of creation, He, indeed, who has bound them to His own immortality by the immortality of their souls!"

"Oh, your words are beautiful, comforting!" exclaimed Hardy, more and more aroused; "but, alas!

why, then, are there so many wretches on earth, in spite of the providential care of the Lord?"

"Yes, oh, yes, there is in the world so much of misery," answered Gabriel, with dejection and sorrow. "Yes, so many poor destitute of all joy, all hope, who are hungry and cold, without clothes or shelter, in the midst of immense riches, which the Creator hath dispensed, not for the happiness of certain men, but for the happiness of all; for it is his wish that the division should be made with justice[1] — but some have seized on the common heritage by cunning and force; and it is that which afflicts God. Oh, yes, if he suffer, it is to see that, in order to satisfy the cruel egotism of some, innumerable masses of creatures are bound down by a deplorable fate. Thus the oppressors of all times, all countries, daring to take God as their accomplice, have united to proclaim, in his name, that fearful maxim, 'Man is born to suffer — his humiliations, his sufferings, are pleasing unto God.' Yes, they have proclaimed this, so that, the more the lot of the creature whom they wrong was harsh, humiliating, painful, the more the creature shed of sweat, of tears, of blood, the more, according to these murderers, was the Lord satisfied and glorified."

"Ah, I understand you! I see all now, I recollect," cried M. Hardy, suddenly, as if awaking from a dream, as though the light had suddenly beamed on his darkened thought. "Oh, yes, this is what I have always believed, before such shocking griefs had weakened my understanding."

"Yes," exclaimed Gabriel; "your great and noble heart always believed this, and then you did not suppose that all was wretchedness here below; for, thanks to

[1] The doctrine, not of sharing, but of community, not of division, but of association, is substantially laid down in this passage of the New Testament, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed were his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked."—*Acts of the Apostles*, iv. 32-34.

yourself, your work-people lived happily; all was not then deceit and vanity, for every day your heart rejoiced in the gratitude of your fellow creatures; all was not then tears and lamentations, for you saw constantly around you smiling countenances. The creature was not then inexorably devoted to misfortune, because it filled him with felicity. Ah, believe me, when we enter, with all our hearts, our love, and our faith, into the real views of God — of God the Saviour, who has said, 'Love one another' — we see, we feel, we know that the end of the scheme of humanity is happiness for all, and that man was born to be happy! Ah, my brother," added Gabriel, moved to tears as he looked at the maxims with which the chamber was surrounded, "this terrible book has done you great harm — this book, which they have had the audacity to call 'The Imitation of Christ,'" added Gabriel, with indignation. "This book the imitation of the word of Christ, — this miserable book, which contains only thoughts of vengeance, contempt, death, and despair, when Christ had only the words of peace, pardon, hope, and love!"

"Oh, I believe you!" cried M. Hardy, overwhelmed with delight. "I believe you, and I have need of believing you."

"Oh, my brother!" resumed Gabriel, more and more moved; "my brother, believe in a God always good, always merciful, always loving. Believe in a God who blesses labour, a God who would suffer cruelly for his children, if, instead of employing the goods with which he has endowed you for the good of all, you were to isolate yourself for ever in an enervating and sterile despair! No, no, God will not have it so! Up, then, up, my brother," added Gabriel, taking Hardy cordially by the hand, who rose, as if obedient to a generous magnetic influence. "Up, my brother, a whole world of labourers bless and appeal to you; quit this tomb — come — come into the broad and expansive air, the eye

of the bright sun, to the midst of warm and sympathising hearts. Leave this stifling air for the wholesome and vivifying air of liberty; leave this sad and gloomy retreat for an abode animated by the song of the labourer. Come, come, and meet again those hard-working artisans, whose protector you are. Lifted up by their robust arms, pressed to their throbbing and generous bosoms, surrounded by women, children, old men, weeping with joy for your return amongst them, you will be again invigorated. You will feel that the will, the power of God is in you, inasmuch as you can do so much for the happiness of your fellow creatures."

"Gabriel, you say the truth — it is to you, it is to God that our poor family of hard-working mechanics will owe the return of their benefactor," exclaimed Agricola, throwing himself into Gabriel's arms, and squeezing him most affectionately to his heart. "Ah, now I fear nothing. M. Hardy will be restored to us!"

"Yes; you are right, it will be to him, this right worthy priest of Christ, that I shall owe my return to myself, for here I was buried alive in a sepulchre," said M. Hardy, who had risen straight firmly, his cheeks lightly coloured, his eye sparkling, although but so recently he was pallid, bowed down, prostrated.

"At last, then, you are restored to us?" cried the smith; "and now I have no more fears."

"I hope so, my friend," replied M. Hardy.

"You accept Mlle. de Cardoville's offers?"

"By and by I will write to her on the subject; but, first," he added, with a grave and serious air, "I wish to confer alone with my brother," and he offered his hand gratefully to Gabriel. "He will allow me to give him the name of brother — he, the generous apostle of the fraternity!"

"Oh, my mind is easy! As soon as I have left you alone with him," said Agricola, "I shall run to Mlle. de Cardoville to tell her the good news. But, now I

think of it, if you leave to-day, M. Hardy, where will you go to? Shall I look out for you?"

"We will talk that over with your worthy and excellent brother," replied M. Hardy. "Go, I entreat, and thank Mlle. de Cardoville for me, and say that this evening I shall do myself the honour of replying to her."

"Ah, sir, I must keep my heart and head steady, if I would not go wild with joy!" said the worthy Agricola, placing his hands in turns on his head and heart in the intoxication of his happiness. Then, turning towards Gabriel, he again folded him to his heart, and said in his ear, "In one hour I shall return, but not alone, all our people with me, *en masse*, — you'll see; but, not a word to M. Hardy, I have my plan."

And the smith went out in a state of unutterable delight.

Gabriel and Hardy remained alone.

Rodin and D'Aigrigny had, as we know, been invisibly present at this scene.

"Well, and what does your reverence now think?" inquired D'Aigrigny of Rodin, in great alarm.

"I think that they have delayed too long in returning from the archiepiscopal palace, and that this heretical missionary will ruin everything," said Rodin, gnawing his nails to the quick until the blood started.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONFESSION.

When Agricola had quitted the chamber, M. Hardy, approaching Gabriel, said to him:

"M. l'Abbé —"

"No, say brother. You have given me this name, and I would have it," said the young man, affectionately, as he extended his hand to Hardy, who shook it cordially, and replied:

"Well, my brother, your words have put new life into me, have recalled me to duties which in my sorrows I had overlooked; and now, may the strength not be wanting to me in the fresh trial I must undergo, for, alas, you do not know all!"

"What do you mean?" asked Gabriel, with interest.

"I have painful confessions to make to you," answered M. Hardy, after a moment's silence and reflection. "Will you hear my confession?"

"I beseech you say your confidence, my brother," observed Gabriel.

"Then, can you not hear me as a confessor?"

"As much as I can," replied Gabriel, "I avoid official confession, if it may be so called. It has, in my opinion, many unfortunate disadvantages; but I am happy, oh, very happy! when I inspire such confidence, that a friend comes to open his heart to me as a friend, and says to me, 'I suffer; comfort me. I doubt; counsel me. I am happy; participate in my joy.' Oh, believe that to me this confession is the most holy. It is

this that Christ intended when he said, 'Confess ye one to another.' Tenfold wretched is he who in his life has not found one faithful and sure heart to which he could thus confess, — is he not, my brother? Yet, as I have submitted myself to the laws of the church, by virtue of vows voluntarily pronounced," said the young priest, unable to repress a sigh, "I obey the laws of the church; and if you desire it, my brother, I will be a confessor, and hear you."

"You obey even those laws which you do not approve?" asked Hardy, astonished at this submission.

"My brother, whatever experience may teach us, whatever it may unveil," answered Gabriel, sorrowfully, "a vow freely, knowingly made, is with a priest a sacred engagement; with a man of honour, a sworn oath. So long as I remain in the church, I will obey its discipline, how heavy soever that discipline may at times be."

"For you, my brother?"

"Yes; for us country priests, or for those doing duty in cities, for us, the working clergy, the discipline is severe. The aristocracy which has been gradually introduced into the church is often of almost feudal rigour towards us; but such is the divine essence of Christianity that it resists the abuses which tend to destroy its nature; and it is in the obscure ranks of the lower clergy that I can serve, better than any where else, the holy cause of the disinherited, and preach them emancipation with greater independence. It is for that, my brother, that I remain in the church, and, being there, I submit to its discipline. I tell you this, my brother," added Gabriel, with warmth, "because you and I preach in the same cause. The artisans whom you have brought to share with you in the fruit of your labours are no longer disinherited. Thus, then, by the good you effect, you serve Christ more efficaciously than I do."

"And I will continue to serve him, provided, as I have already observed, I have sufficient strength."

"Why should your strength be wanting?"

"If you knew how wretched I am, — if you knew all the blows that have struck me!"

"No doubt the ruin and conflagration which have destroyed your factory were most deplorable."

"Ah, my brother," said M. Hardy, interrupting Gabriel, "what was that? My courage would not have drooped before a misfortune which money alone could repair. But alas! there are losses which nothing can repair; there are ruins of the heart which nothing can renovate. No; and yet, just now, yielding before the enthusiasm of your elevated language, the future, dark as it was till then before me, brightened. You had encouraged, animated me, by reminding me of the duties I had still to discharge in the world."

"Well, my brother?"

"Alas! fresh fears come to beset me, when I think of returning to that active life in the world where I have suffered so much."

"But who aroused, created these fears?" inquired Gabriel, with increasing interest.

"Listen, my brother," replied Hardy. "I had concentrated all the tenderness and devotion which was left in my heart in two beings, — in a friend whom I believed sincere, and in an affection still more tender. The friend deceived me in an atrocious manner. The woman, after having sacrificed her duties for me, has had the courage (for which I must the more honour her) to sacrifice our loves to the repose of her mother, and has quitted France for ever. Alas! I fear these sorrows are incurable, and will come and crush me in the very midst of the new path which you are urging me to pursue. I confess my weakness, — it is great; and it alarms me the more, as I have no right to remain idle, solitary, so long as I can still do something for my fellow creatures. You have enlightened me on this duty, my brother, but still my sole fear, in spite of my good resolution, is, I

repeat, to feel my strength abandon me, when I again find myself in this world, which must for ever be to me cold and deserted."

"But these worthy artisans who await you, bless you, will they not people the world for you?"

"Yes, my brother," replied Hardy, with bitterness; "but formerly, to this pleasing feeling of doing good were united two affections which shared my existence. They are no longer mine, but leave in my heart an immense void. I had relied on religion to fill it, but, alas, to replace what causes me regret so poignant, all that I have given to me to feed on in my desolated heart is my despair; and they tell me that the more deeply I dig into it, the greater tortures I experience, the more meritorious shall I be in the eyes of the Lord."

"And they deceive you, my brother, I assure you. It is happiness, and not grief, which is in the eyes of the Lord the end of human creation; he would have man happy, because he would have him just and good."

"Oh, that I had sooner heard these words of hope!" exclaimed Hardy. "My wounds would then be healed, instead of becoming incurable; I should the sooner have recommenced the work of good which you urge me to undertake, and have found in that the consolation, oblivion, perhaps, of my woes; whilst at present, oh, it is indeed horrible to confess, they have made grief so familiar to me, so identified it with my existence, that I seem to think it must for ever paralyse my existence."

Then, ashamed of this relapse into weakness, Hardy added, in a voice of agony, hiding his face in his hands:

"Oh, pardon — pardon my weakness! But if you knew what a poor creature is who only lived on affection, and to whom everything failed at once! Yes, indeed, it seeks on all sides to attach itself to something; and its hesitation, fears, weaknesses even, are, believe me, more worthy of compassion than disdain."

There was something so distressing in the humiliation of this confession, that Gabriel was moved by it even to tears.

From this almost diseased weakness the young missionary recognised with affright the terrible effects of the manœuvres of the reverend fathers, so skilful in poisoning, in rendering mortal the wounds of susceptible and tender souls (whom they seek to isolate and inveigle), by distilling into them incessantly, drop by drop, the acrid poison of the most desolating maxims.

Knowing, too, that the excess of despair has a sort of bewildering attraction, these priests dig, dig out this abyss around their victim, until, distracted, fascinated, he plunges incessantly his fixed and burning look into the depths of this precipice, which must eventually engulf him, — fatal shipwreck, of which their cupidity gathers all the spoils!

In vain does the azure of the sky, the gilded sunbeam shine; in vain does the unhappy wretch feel that he would be saved by raising his eyes towards heaven; in vain does he even cast a stealthy glance heavenward; for at last, yielding to the omnipotence of the infernal charm cast around him by these malevolent priests, he again plunges his looks into the depths of the gulf which gapes to receive him.

It was thus that M. Hardy stood, and thus Gabriel understood all the danger of the unhappy man's position; and, collecting all his strength to snatch him from this destruction so imminent, he cried:

"What do you mean, my brother, by pity and disdain? What is there more sacred, more holy in the world, in the eyes of God and men, than a soul which seeks for faith in which to fix itself after the torments of the passions? Take courage, my brother, your wounds are not incurable; once out of this house, believe me, they will rapidly heal."

"Alas! how can I indulge in any such hope?"

"Believe me, my brother, they will heal from the moment when your past woes, far from arousing in you thoughts of despair, shall awaken thoughts that are consolatory, — almost delightful."

"Thoughts that are consolatory — almost delightful?" exclaimed M. Hardy, unable to believe what he heard.

"Yes," replied Gabriel, smiling with angelic sweetness; "for there are great delights, great consolations in pity, in pardon. Tell me — tell me, my brother, did the sight of those who had betrayed him inspire Christ with hatred, despair, and vengeance? No, no; he found in his heart words filled with mildness and pardon; he smiled in his tears with unspeakable indulgence, and he prayed, too, for his enemies. Well, then, instead of suffering with so much bitterness for the treachery of a friend, pity him, my brother; pray affectionately for him; for you are not the more miserable of the two. Tell me, in your generous friendship, what a treasure has not this faithless friend lost? Who has told you that he does not repent, that he does not suffer? Alas! it is true, if you constantly think of the ill this treachery has done you, your heart will break in its incurable desolation. Think, on the contrary, of the charm of forgiveness, the sweetness of prayer, and your heart will be lightened, and your soul be happy, for it will ascend to God."

To open suddenly before a disposition so generous, so delicate, so loving, the adorable and infinite way of pardon and of prayer, was to respond to its instincts — was to save this unhappy man; whilst to chain him down in a gloomy, barren despair, was to slay him, as the reverend fathers had hoped to do.

Hardy remained for a moment as if dazzled at the sight of the radiant horizon, which for the second time Gabriel's apostolic language had suddenly called up before his eyes.

Then, his heart palpitating with such contrary emotions, he exclaimed:

"Oh, my brother, what holy power is in your words! How could you thus change in a moment, as it were, bitterness into sweetness? It seems to me as if already a calm was renewed in my soul, when I reflect, as you suggest, on pardon, prayer — prayer filled with mildness and hope."

"Ah, you will see," continued Gabriel, enthusiastically, "what soft joys await you! Pray for those we love — pray for those we have loved, to put, by our prayers, God in communion with those we cherish fondly. And she whose love was so precious to you, — why should her memory be painful to you? Why flee from her? Ah, my brother, on the contrary, think of her but to purify, to sanctify the thought by prayer; to allow a divine love to succeed a terrestrial one; a Christian love, the heavenly love of a brother, for a sister in Jesus Christ! And then, if this woman has been guilty in the eyes of Heaven, what so delightful as to pray for her! What unspeakable joy to be enabled each day to speak of her to God, — to God who, always merciful and good, touched by your prayers, will pardon her; for he reads the deepest recesses of the heart, and knows how often, alas! many lapses are so fatal. Did not Christ intercede with the Father for the offending Magdalene and the woman taken in adultery? Lost creatures, he did not repulse them, he did not curse them — he pitied them, prayed for them, 'because they had loved much,' said the Saviour of men."

"Ah, now I understand you!" cried Hardy. "Prayer is still to love; prayer is to pardon, and not to curse; it is to hope, instead of despair! Prayers, indeed, are the tears which fall on the heart like delicious dews, and not those which scorch as they drop. Yes, I understand you now, for you do not say, 'To suffer, is to pray.' No, no, I feel it. You speak the truth when you declare that to

hope, to pardon, is to pray. Yes; and, now, thanks to you, I will return to life without fear."

Then, his eyes moist with tears, Hardy extended his arms to Gabriel, crying, "Ah, my brother, you save me a second time!"

And these two good and noble creatures threw themselves into each other's arms.

Rodin and D'Aigrigny had, as we know, been present, unseen, at this scene. Rodin, listening with "greedy ear," had not lost one word of the conversation.

At the moment when Gabriel and Hardy were embracing, Rodin suddenly withdrew his reptile eye from the hole through which he had been looking.

The Jesuit's countenance had an expression of diabolical joy and triumph. D'Aigrigny, whom the *dénouement* of the scene had, on the contrary, depressed and alarmed, could not comprehend the gratified air of his associate, and looked at him with indescribable astonishment.

"I have the lever," he said, suddenly, in his curt and sharp manner.

"What do you mean?" asked D'Aigrigny, amazed.

"Have you a travelling carriage here?" asked Rodin, giving a reply to the question of the reverend father.

D'Aigrigny, astonished at this question, opened his troubled eyes, and repeated, mechanically:

"A travelling carriage?"

"Yes, yes," said Rodin, impatiently; "do you think I'm talking Hebrew? Is there a travelling carriage here? Is that a plain question?"

"Certainly; for I have mine here," replied the reverend father.

"Then send for post-horses instantly."

"For what purpose?"

"To convey M. Hardy."

"Convey M. Hardy!" replied D'Aigrigny, thinking Rodin delirious.

"Yes," he replied. "You will convey him to St. Herem this evening."

"To that sad and gloomy solitude — he? — M. Hardy?"

D'Aigrigny believed he must be in a dream.

"He — M. Hardy," replied Rodin, in the affirmative, and shrugging his shoulders.

"Convey M. Hardy — now — after what Gabriel has — "

"Before another half hour M. Hardy will beg me on his knees to convey him from Paris to the world's end, — to a desert, if I can."

"And Gabriel?"

"And the letter which they bring me from the archbishop's palace but just now?"

"Why, you said it was too late now."

"But then I had not the lever — now I hold it," answered Rodin, in his shortest tone.

So saying, the two reverend fathers hastily left the concealed retreat.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE VISIT.

It is useless to remark that, with a reserve full of dignity, Gabriel had contented himself to have recourse to none but the most generous means to snatch M. Hardy from the murderous influence of the reverend fathers. It was repugnant to the great and noble mind of the young missionary to descend to the disclosure of the odious machinations of these priests. He would only have had recourse to this extreme means if his earnest and sympathising language had failed with the infatuation of M. Hardy.

"Exertion, prayer, and pardon," said Hardy, with ecstacy, after having pressed Gabriel in his arms. "With these three words you have restored me to life and hope."

He had just pronounced these words when the door opened and a servant entered, who, without uttering a syllable, handed a large envelope to the young priest, and then quitted the apartment.

Gabriel, much surprised, took the letter and looked at it mechanically at first; then perceiving at one of the corners a particular stamp, he broke the seal hastily, drew out a paper in the form of an official despatch, to which was appended a seal of red wax.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabriel, involuntarily, and in a voice of deep emotion. Then addressing M. Hardy, "Excuse me, sir."

"What is it, any bad news?" inquired Hardy, with an air of interest.

"Yes, very bad," answered Gabriel, sorrowfully. Then he added, speaking to himself, "So it was for this, then, that I was summoned to Paris; and they have not even deigned to hear me, but strike without permitting me to justify myself!" Again he was silent for a moment, then he added, with a deep sigh of resignation, "No matter, I must obey. I will obey — my vows compel me."

Hardy, looking at the young priest with as much surprise as uneasiness, said to him, affectionately:

"Although my friendship and gratitude have been yours but so short a time, yet can I not be, in any way, serviceable to you? I owe you so much that I should be so happy in any way, however trifling, to prove my gratitude."

"You will have done a great deal for me, my brother, by leaving me the remembrance of this day; you make my resignation to a cruel blow the more easy."

"A cruel blow?" said Hardy, hastily.

"Or, rather — no — a painful surprise," replied Gabriel. And, turning away his head, he wiped a tear which was on his cheek, and continued, "But, by addressing myself to the good God, the just God, I shall not lack consolation; I have the first fruit already when I leave you in the right and noble path. Adieu, then, my brother, we shall soon meet again."

"You leave me?"

"It must be so. I should wish first to know how this letter came to me here; then I must instantly obey an order I have received. My good Agricola will come to take your orders, — he will inform me of your resolution, and the house where I can meet you; and when you please, we will see each other again."

Hardy from delicacy did not press Gabriel to inform him of the cause of his chagrin, and replied:

"You ask me when we shall see each other again? Why, to-morrow; since I quit this abode to-day."

"To-morrow, then, my dear brother," said Gabriel, squeezing Hardy's hand.

The latter, by an involuntary movement, perhaps instinctive, at the moment when Gabriel withdrew his hand, squeezed it, and retained it between his own, as if, fearing to see him depart, he would fain have retained him.

The young priest, surprised, looked at Hardy, who said to him, with a benign smile, and releasing the hand he held:

"Pardon, my brother; but you see, after what I have suffered here, I have become like a child who is afraid when he is left alone."

"And I am quite easy about you. I leave you with consoling thoughts, with assured hopes. They will suffice to occupy your solitude until the arrival of my worthy Agricola, who will not be long before he returns. So once more farewell until to-morrow, my brother."

"Farewell, until to-morrow, my dear preserver. Oh, do not fail to come; for I shall still have the greatest need of your benevolent support in order to make my first steps in the open daylight, — I, who have been so long motionless in the midst of darkness."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Gabriel; "and till then, courage, hope, and prayer."

"Courage, hope, and prayer," responded M. Hardy; "with these words I am very strong."

And he was left alone.

It was very singular, but the kind of involuntary fear which Hardy had experienced at the moment when Gabriel was about to leave him was reproduced in his mind under another form; immediately after the departure of the young priest, Hardy thought he beheld a sinister and expanding shadow succeed to the pure and soft light that beamed in the presence of Gabriel.

This kind of reaction was the more easily to be conceived after a day full of such deep and contrasting emotions, especially if we reflect on the state of physical and moral weakness to which Hardy had been for so long a time reduced.

About a quarter of an hour after the departure of Gabriel, the servant attached to the service of the boarder of the reverend fathers entered, and handed him a letter.

"From whom does it come?" he inquired.

"From a boarder in the house, sir," replied the man, with a bow.

This man had a sly and puritanical look, — his hair flat over his brows, and his eyes always looking on the ground, and, as he awaited the reply of M. Hardy, he crossed his hands, and twiddled his thumbs composedly.

M. Hardy broke the seal of the letter just received, and read as follows:

"*Monsieur:* — I have only to-day learned, at this very moment, and accidentally, that I am with you in this respectable house. A protracted illness which I have had, and the extreme retirement in which I live, will explain my ignorance of our being neighbours. Besides, as we never met but once, sir, although that circumstance which procured me the honour of an interview was very recent, yet it was so distressing for you that I cannot suppose you have forgotten it."

Hardy made a gesture of surprise, recalled his recollections; but, not finding anything which could give him any light on the matter, continued to read:

"This circumstance, however, awakened in me so deep and respectful a sympathy for you, sir, that I cannot resist my strong desire to present my respects to you, especially when I understand that you are about to quit this house to-day, as I have just learned from the excellent and worthy Abbé Gabriel, one of the

men whom I love, admire, and venerate most in the world.

"May I hope, sir, that, at the moment when you are about to quit our common retreat to return into the world, you will deign to receive, with kind acquiescence, the prayer, perhaps ill-timed, of a poor old man henceforth dedicated to a life of unbroken solitude, and who can never expect to meet you in the midst of the whirlpool of society which he has quitted for ever?

"Awaiting the honour of your reply, sir, allow me to present the assurances of the profound esteem of him who has the honour to be, sir, with the most unfeigned respect,

"Your very humble and very obedient servant,

"RODIN."

After perusing this letter, and the name of him who had signed it, M. Hardy again summoned up his recollection, tried a long while, but was unable to recall either the name of Rodin or the "distressing circumstance" to which he alluded.

After a protracted silence he said to the servant:

"It was M. Rodin who gave you this letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who is M. Rodin?"

"A good old gentleman, who is recovering from a long illness, which very nearly carried him off. He is hardly recovered yet, but is still so sad and so weak that it is painful to see him; and it's a great pity, so it is, for there is not a worthier or nicer gentleman in the whole house, unless it is monsieur," added the servant, bowing fawningly to Hardy, "and he's just such another as M. Rodin."

"M. Rodin?" said Hardy, with a pensive air; "it is strange, I do not remember the name, or any event attached to it."

"If monsieur will give his answer," observed the ser-

vant, "I'll take it to M. Rodin, who is taking leave of the Père d'Aigrigny."

"Taking leave?"

"Yes, sir, the post-horses are just arrived."

"For whom?" asked M. Hardy.

"For Père d'Aigrigny, sir."

"Is he going to travel, then?" inquired Hardy, much astonished.

"Oh, I dare say he won't be very long absent," said the servant, with a confidential air, "for the reverend father has no one with him, and very little luggage. Besides, no doubt the reverend father will come to take leave of you, sir. But what answer to M. Rodin?"

The letter which Hardy had received from the reverend father was couched in such polite terms, he spoke of Gabriel with so much kindness, that M. Hardy, impelled, moreover, by a natural curiosity, and seeing no reason for refusing this interview at the moment he was about to quit the house, replied to the servant:

"Be so kind as to tell M. Rodin that, if he will take the trouble to come to me here, I will await him."

"I'll go and tell him this moment, sir," said the servant, who bowed and quitted the room.

Alone, M. Hardy, whilst asking himself who M. Rodin could be, employed himself in making some trifling preparations for his departure. Under no consideration in the world would he have passed another night in this house, and, in order to keep up his courage, he called to mind every instant the apostolic and mild language of Gabriel, just as believers recite certain litanies that they may not fall into temptation.

The servant soon returned, and said to M. Hardy:

"Here's M. Rodin, sir."

"Beg him to come in."

Rodin entered, dressed in his black dressing-gown, and holding his old silk cap in his hand.

The servant left the room.

The twilight was coming on. M. Hardy rose to meet Rodin, whose features he could not at first recognise; but when the reverend father had reached a spot which was lighted up by a ray of brighter hue near the window, Hardy, having looked at the Jesuit for a moment, could not repress a cry extorted from him by surprise and agonising remembrance.

This first movement of astonishment and pain over, Hardy, recovering himself, said to Rodin, in a faltering voice:

"You here, sir? Ah, you are right, the circumstance under which I saw you for the first time was indeed distressing."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Rodin, in a paternal and satisfied tone, "I was sure you had not forgotten me."

## CHAPTER VI.

### PRAYER.

It will be recollected that Rodin went (although then unknown to M. Hardy) to find him at his factory, in order to disclose to him the infamous treachery of M. de Blessac, — a frightful shock which had only for a few moments preceded a second blow no less terrible, for it was in the presence of Rodin that Hardy learned the unexpected departure of the woman he adored. After the preceding scenes we may understand how afflicting to him was the unexpected appearance of Rodin. Yet, thanks to the salutary effects of Gabriel's counsels, he grew gradually calmer. To the contraction of his features there succeeded a melancholy calm, and he said to Rodin:

"Indeed, sir, I did not expect to have met you in this house."

"Alas, sir!" replied Rodin, with a sigh, "I did not think either to have come here, in all probability to finish my wretched days, when I went, without knowing you, and with the sole view of rendering a service to a worthy man, to unmask to you an infamous treachery."

"In truth, sir, you did me a real service, and perhaps at that painful moment I expressed my gratitude very inefficiently, for at the moment when you revealed to me M. de Blessac's treachery — "

"You were overwhelmed by another piece of most painful information," said Rodin, interrupting Hardy; "I shall never forget the sudden arrival of that poor,

pale, agitated lady, who, regardless of my presence, came to inform you that a person whose affection was very dear to you had suddenly quitted Paris."

"Yes, sir, and without thinking of thanking you, I rushed precipitately from the apartment," observed Hardy, in a melancholy tone.

"Do you know, sir," said Rodin, after a moment's pause, "that there are sometimes singular approximations?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Whilst I was going to you to inform you that you were betrayed in an infamous manner — myself — I —"

Rodin interrupted himself as if he was overcome by some sudden emotion, and his face betrayed such intense grief, that M. Hardy said to him, with interest:

"What ails you, sir?"

"Pardon me," replied Rodin, with a bitter smile, "thanks to the religious counsels of the angelic Abbé Gabriel, I have learned to understand what resignation means; yet, still, there are times when at certain recollections I experience intense pain. I was saying," continued Rodin, in a firmer voice, "that the day after that on which I had been to say to you, you are deceived, I was myself the victim of an infamous deception. An adopted son, a forsaken child whom I had protected —" Again pausing, he passed his trembling hand over his eyes, and said, "Excuse me, sir, for speaking of sorrows to which you must be indifferent. Excuse the indiscreet sorrow of a poor, grief-stricken old man."

"Sir, I have suffered too much myself for any sorrows to be indifferent to me," replied M. Hardy; "besides you are not a stranger to me. You have rendered me a real service, and we experience a mutual veneration for a young priest."

"The Abbé Gabriel!" cried Rodin, interrupting Hardy. "Ah, sir, he is my preserver, my benefactor. If you but knew his cares, his devotion for me during my long ill-

ness, which a terrible grief had occasioned; if you knew the unutterable sweetness of the counsel he gave me!"

"If I knew it, sir!" exclaimed Hardy; "oh, yes, I know how salutary his influence is."

"Ah, sir, are not the precepts of religion which fall from his lips full of mildness?" replied Rodin, with enthusiasm. "Are they not comforting? Do they not make us love and hope, instead of fear and tremble?"

"Alas! sir, in this very house," said Hardy, "I have made the comparison."

"I," said Rodin, "I have been so fortunate as to have at once the angelic Abbé Gabriel for my confessor, or, rather, my confidant."

"Yes," replied Hardy, "for he prefers confidence to confession."

"How well you know him!" said Rodin, with an air of delight and simplicity impossible to portray. "He is not a man, he is an angel. His language, so persuasive, would convert the most hardened; myself, for instance, — I confess it, without being impious, — I had lived in the sentiments of religion which is called natural, but the angelic Abbé Gabriel gradually fixed my vague beliefs, gave them a body, a soul, and, in fact, has given me faith."

"Oh, he is a priest according to Christ, he is a priest all love and forgiveness," cried M. Hardy.

"What you say is so true," answered Rodin, "that I became almost mad with grief; now thinking of the ungrateful wretch who had paid my paternal bounties by the most monstrous ingratitude, and giving way to all the agonies of despair, now falling into a gloomy reverie as chilling as the grave, when suddenly the Abbé Gabriel appeared, the darkness vanished, and the daylight broke in upon me."

"You are right, sir, there are singular approximations," said M. Hardy, giving way more and more to the confidence and sympathy which were excited in him by

so many points of similarity between his own and the pretended position of Rodin. "And, in truth," he added, "I now congratulate myself on having seen you before leaving this house. If I had been capable of relapsing into a state of contemptible weakness, your example would in itself prevent me. Since I have heard you, I feel myself more strengthened in the noble path which has been disclosed to me by him whom you so correctly call the angelic abbé."

"Then the poor old man will not have to regret following the first impulse of his heart which attracted him towards you," observed Rodin, with touching expression; "you will at least preserve a recollection of me in that world to which you are about to return?"

"Be assured of that, sir. But allow me one question. You remain, they tell me, in this house?"

"Why not? The calm is here so perfect, one is so little disturbed in one's prayers, and you must know," added Rodin, in a tone filled with good feeling, "I have suffered so much ill, such misery, the behaviour of that ingrate who has deceived me has been so horrible, he was so depraved in his conduct, that God must have been greatly angered against him. I am so old that I can scarcely hope, by the exercise of fervent prayer during the few days that remain to me, to disarm the just anger of the Lord. Oh, prayer — prayer — it was the Abbé Gabriel who revealed to me all the power, all the sweetness, and also all the severe duties it imposes."

"Truly, these duties are great and sacred," replied M. Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Do you know the life of De Rancey?" inquired Rodin, looking at Hardy with singular expression.

"The founder of the abbey of La Trappe?" said Hardy, surprised at Rodin's inquiry. "I have vaguely, and a long time ago, heard talk of the grounds of his conversion."

"Because there is nowhere a more striking example of the omnipotence of prayer, and the state of almost divine ecstasy to which it can lead religious minds. In a few words I will tell you this instructive and tragic history. M. de Rancey — but I beg your pardon, I am encroaching on your time."

"No, no," eagerly replied M. Hardy, "you know not, on the contrary, how much what you are saying interests me. My conversation with Gabriel was suddenly interrupted, and, when I listen to you, it seems as though I heard the full development of the sentiments he had vaguely expressed. Speak then, I conjure you."

"Most willingly, for I would fain have the advantages I derived (thanks to our heavenly-minded abbé) from the conversion of M. de Rancey, as full of blessings and benefits to you under your particular affliction, as by the aid of our divine Gabriel it was to me in mine."

"And it was the Abbé Gabriel who worked your cure?"

"It was, indeed; and to give greater weight to his own exhortations, he cited to me this edifying history. Alas! sir, I owe it to the consoling words of this youthful priest that my poor crushed feelings, and all but broken heart, ever regained strength and courage to endure what further trials the all-wise Disposer of men shall see fit to send."

"Nay, then, I shall listen with a double interest!"

"M. de Rancey," commenced Rodin, attentively observing M. Hardy, "was a man of the world, and a soldier; young, handsome, and ardent in all his affections; who passionately loved and was beloved by a young and lovely girl, whose merits were only equalled by her exalted rank. What were the obstacles which prevented their union, I know not, but their love was a stolen one, and their joys required the mask of concealment; but each night M. de Rancey was admitted by a secret staircase to the apartment of his mistress, from whence he

again retired at dawn of day, silently and unseen as he had entered. Theirs was, indeed, a passion which the human heart can feel but once during life, and the very mystery which enshrouded their love, the sacrifices made by the devoted girl, the risks they ran, even combined to give a stronger character to their armour. And thus, amid the shades and tranquillity of night, did these happy lovers meet during two years, passed in a delirium and fervour of tenderness almost approaching a state of superhuman bliss."

At these words M. Hardy started; for the first time since his troubles began, a burning blush rose to his cheeks and forehead; his heart beat with impetuous violence, in spite of his attempts to control his emotion, for he remembered how often he, too, had experienced all the intoxicating ardour, the burning fervour of a hidden and guilty passion.

Although the day was rapidly declining, Rodin, casting a sidelong glance on M. Hardy, perceived that his language had taken the desired effect on the mind of his victim. He then proceeded:

"Sometimes, when reflecting on all the consequences that would ensue to his adored mistress, if their liaison were discovered, M. de Rancey proposed to break the tender ties which bound their hearts; but the impassioned girl would throw her arms around the neck of her lover, and threaten him in language the most frantically tender to reveal all herself, and brave every danger that might befall her, if he ever again hinted at their parting. Too weak and too deeply enamoured of his beautiful mistress to resist her prayers, M. de Rancey yielded to her wish; and the enraptured pair, blinded, fascinated by their intoxicating passion, gave themselves up with fresh ardour to the concealed delights of their mutual love till they forgot all things on earth — almost in heaven."

M. Hardy listened with feverish, restless avidity and

burning eagerness, while the Jesuit persisted in thus dwelling on the sensual delights of an ardent though hidden love; by degrees the warm, the lover-like recollections of his own past happiness, which had been until now drowned in his tears, resumed their pristine force, and to the gentle calmness produced by the words of Gabriel succeeded a deep, painful, and oppressive agitation, which, combined with the reaction arising from the many exciting events of the day, began to disturb even the clear action of his brain.

Having gained his proposed end, Rodin thus resumed his narrative:

"A fatal moment arrived. M. de Rancey was compelled by his military duties to quit for awhile the mistress he so idolised; but the campaign was a short one, and he hastened back more enamoured than ever. He had contrived to write word to his beloved that she might expect him almost as soon as his letter; and, accordingly, directly the shades of night had fallen, he hurried to the private staircase leading to the apartment of his dearest treasure. Alas! he found but the empty case, the jewel was for ever lost to him, — she who was dearer to him than his heart's blood lay stretched in the cold embrace of death."

"Dreadful!" murmured M. Hardy, shuddering with nameless dread, and covering his face with his hands.

"She had expired that very morning," continued Rodin; "two large tapers were burning beside her funeral couch. M. de Rancey neither could nor would believe it possible she could be dead; he threw himself on his knees beside her, and in his frenzied grief sought to raise that head, — so lovely, so beloved, — that he might cover it with kisses; the beauteous head parted from the fair neck, and remained a ghastly spectacle in his arms! Yes," continued Rodin, observing M. Hardy start, turn pale, and draw back in terror, "yes, the cause of death had been so sudden and so extraordinary that

the unfortunate girl had not been enabled to receive the last holy rites of our church! After her decease, the medical gentlemen who had attended her, with the view of discovering the nature of the singular malady which had thus baffled their skill, had mutilated the corpse for the purpose of investigating the supposed seat of disease."

As Rodin reached this point of his narrative the day was drawing to a close, and a dim twilight alone prevailed in the gloomy apartment of M. Hardy, amid which, faintly distinguishable, was the crafty, saturnine countenance of Rodin, whose tall, meagre form, clad in his long, loose, black robe, added to the effect produced by the almost fiendish glare of his malignant eyes. Bending beneath the violent emotions produced by this recital, so strangely intermingled with pictures of death, voluptuous pleasure, stolen love, and death-bed horrors, M. Hardy remained speechless and agitated, waiting with intense curiosity for Rodin to proceed, his heart palpitating with an indescribable mixture of agony, fear, and deep interest. At length he managed to articulate, as he wiped the cold sweat from his brow:

"And M. de Rancey, what became of him?"

"After two days of absolute delirium," continued Rodin, "he renounced the world, and shut himself up in the most impenetrable solitude. The first part of his retirement was dreadful; in his utter despair he uttered cries and groans of rage and grief which might be heard afar off, and twice he even raised his hand against his life for the purpose of escaping from the fearful visions by which he was tormented."

"Had he, then, visions?" inquired M. Hardy, with increased curiosity and a thrill of sympathising agony.

"Oh, yes," answered Rodin, in a solemn tone, "he had, indeed, most horrible ones! Continually did his eyes behold the unhappy creature, who, dying in the midst of her guilty passion for him, had been thereby plunged in the middle of tormenting flames, her lovely

features distorted by the tortures she underwent, and her lips shrieking in wild, despairing misery. Sometimes she was presented to his mental vision grinding her teeth with impotent fury, and, writhing and twisting in consuming agony, she wept tears of blood, and in an avenging and distracted voice she called aloud to her seducer, 'Be thou for ever cursed! — cursed! — cursed! thou, my destroyer and ruin!'"

And as Rodin uttered these last words, he approached each time a step nearer M. Hardy, as though to give greater effect to what he was saying.

If the exhaustion, terror, and wretchedness of M. Hardy be taken into consideration; if it be remembered that the Jesuit had just been disturbing and probing the very soul of this unfortunate man, had again called into life by his sensual details a love chilled and buried beneath a weight of grief and tears, but not extinguished; if it be also recollected that M. Hardy, in addition to his other causes of distress, had to reproach himself with having, by leading a woman to forget her duties to her husband and family, placed her, according to the Catholic creed, in danger of eternal perdition, it will be easily imagined what a terrifying effect would be produced on his excited mind by this phantasmagoria called up in the midst of silence and solitude by a gloomy and awe-inspiring being like Rodin.

The influence thus effected on M. Hardy was at once deep and sudden, and so much the more dangerous as the Jesuit, with diabolical cunning, continued to work upon the ideas of Gabriel, merely giving them another direction to that of the young priest; for had not he pointed out to M. Hardy that nothing was more delightful, more ineffably soothing, to the wounded soul than to intercede in prayer either for those who had injured us, or those who by our means have been led into evil? Now as pardon always pre-implies previous anger and punishment, so it was that punishment which Rodin

sought to paint in such fearfully vivid characters before the eyes of his victim. With clasped hands, and fixed, terrified gaze, M. Hardy, trembling with awe and dread, seemed still to listen to Rodin, even after the latter had ceased speaking, repeating mechanically to himself, "Accursed! — accursed! — accursed!" Then all at once he exclaimed, in a species of wandering frenzy:

"I, too, shall hear myself styled accursed by the woman whom I have caused to forget her most sacred duties, whom I have rendered for ever guilty in the eyes of God, — that loved being, plunged in eternal flames, will also twist her beauteous form in agony and despair, weep tears of blood, and shout to me from the depths of the abyss whither my hand has plunged her, 'Accursed! — accursed! — accursed!' Some day," added he, with increased terror, — "some day, who knows, perhaps at this very instant, she curses me in her tortures, for this voyage may have proved fatal to her, or the waves may have wrecked the vessel in which she sailed across the ocean! Oh, God of mercy! if it be so, if she be dead, dead in guilt and sin, doomed to everlasting perdition, — and for me, for me, — have pity on her, oh, merciful Father, and expend thy just wrath on me; but pity and spare her, I — I alone am guilty, and deserve thy heaviest punishment!"

And the miserable man, almost driven mad, fell on his knees, with his hands clasped in agony.

"Sir," cried Rodin, with a tender and affectionate voice, and hastening to raise him, "my dear sir — my dear friend, be calm. Compose yourself, I should be miserable to drive you to despair. Alas! my intention is quite the contrary."

"Cursed! — cursed! She will curse me also; she whom I have adored, delivered over to the flames of hell!" murmured Hardy, trembling and appearing not to understand Rodin.

"But, my dear sir, hear me then, I entreat you,"

replied the latter. "Let me finish this history, and then you will find it as consoling as it now appears frightful to you. In the name of Heaven, recall those adorable words of your angelic Abbé Gabriel on the sweetness of prayer!"

At the soothing name of Gabriel, Hardy came to himself, and exclaimed, heart-broken:

"Ah, his words were sweet and benign! Where are they? Oh, for pity, repeat to me those holy words!"

"Our angelic Abbé Gabriel," said Rodin, "spoke of the sweetness of prayer —"

"Oh, yes, prayer."

"Well, my good sir, listen to me, and you will find that it was prayer that saved M. de Rancey, which made of him a saint. Yes, those fearful torments which I have just painted to you — those menacing visions — it is prayer that has dissipated them, changed them into heavenly delights."

"I entreat you," said M. Hardy, in an overwhelming voice, "speak to me of Gabriel — speak to me of heaven. Oh, but no more of these flames of that hell in which guilty women weep tears of blood."

"No, no," added Rodin; and as in the portraiture of hell his accent had been harsh and threatening, so it became tender and soothing as he uttered the following words: "No, no more of these images of despair, for I have said that after suffering infernal tortures, thanks to prayer, as the Abbé Gabriel told you, M. de Rancey tasted the joys of paradise."

"The joys of paradise?" repeated Hardy, listening with avidity.

"One day, in the very agony of his grief, a priest — a good priest, an Abbé Gabriel — came to M. de Rancey. Oh, happiness! oh, providence! In a few days he initiated this unhappy man in the holy mysteries of prayer, — that pious intercession of the creature towards the Creator in favour of a soul exposed to heavenly anger.

Then M. de Rancey seemed transformed, his griefs were appeased; he prayed, and the more he prayed, the more his fervour, his hope increased, — he felt that God listened to him. Instead of forgetting the woman he so adored, he passed whole hours in thinking of her, praying for her salvation. Yes, shut up with happiness in the recess of his obscure cell, alone with the adored remembrances, he passed days and nights in praying for her, in an unspeakable, excited, I might almost say amorous ecstasy."

It is impossible to render the emphasis, almost sensual, with which Rodin accentuated the word amorous.

M. Hardy shuddered with a feeling at once burning and icy; for the first time his weakened mind was struck with the idea of those sad pleasures of asceticism, of ecstasy, — that deplorable catalepsy so frequently erratic, of Ste. Thérèse, St. Aubierge, etc.

Rodin saw this and continued:

"Oh, M. de Rancey was not to be contented with a vague, unmeaning prayer said now and then in the midst of mundane disturbances, which nullify them and prevent their arrival at the ear of the Lord. No, no, in the profoundest depth of his solitude he still sought to render his prayer even more efficacious, so ardently did he desire the eternal salvation of that mistress beyond the grave!"

"What more did he do? Ah, what more did he do in his solitude?" exclaimed M. Hardy, from that moment caught in the spell of the wily Jesuit.

"In the first place," said Rodin, slowly accenting his words, "he became a — monk."

"A monk!" echoed Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Yes," replied Rodin, "he became a monk, because as such his prayer was the more favourably received by Heaven; and then, as in the depths of his undisturbed solitude his thoughts were still sometimes disturbed by the flesh, he fasted, mortified himself, subdued himself,

macerated all that was carnal within him, in order that he might become all mind, and that the prayer coming from his bosom, brilliant, pure as flame, might ascend to the Lord like the perfume of incense."

"Oh, what an intoxicating dream!" exclaimed Hardy, more and more under the spell. "In order to pray more effectually for an adored woman — to become mind, perfume, light."

"Yes, mind, perfume, light," replied Rodin, laying stress on these words; "but it is no dream. How many recluses, how many monks, have, like M. de Rancey, attained the divine ecstasy by prayers, austerities, macerations! and if you but knew the heavenly joys of these ecstasies! Thus to M. de Rancey's terrible visions succeeded (when he had become a monk) most enchanting visions. How many times, after a day of fasting and a night passed in prayers and macerations, did he sink, worn out, exhausted, on the stones of his cell! Then, after the annihilation of matter succeeded the gush of the mind; an inexpressible happiness seized on his senses, heavenly concerts reached his ravished ear, a light at once dazzling and soft, which is not of this world, penetrated through his closed eyelids; then, to the harmonious vibrations of the golden harps of the seraphs, in the midst of a circle of light to which the sun is pale, the monk saw the adored female appear —"

"That woman whom by his prayers he had at length snatched from eternal flames?" said Hardy, in a palpitating voice.

"Yes, herself," replied Rodin, with real and insinuating eloquence, for this monster spoke all languages; "and then, thanks to the prayers of her lover, which the Lord had heard, this woman no longer wept tears of blood, no more twisted her beautiful arms in infernal convulsions. No, no; still lovely, — ah, a thousand times more lovely than when on earth! Lovely with the eternal beauty of angels, — she smiled at her lover

with ineffable love, and her eyes beaming with a humid glow, she said to him in a tender and impassioned voice:

"'Glory to the Lord! Glory to thee, oh, my much adored lover! Thy ineffable prayers, thy austerities, have saved me; the Lord hath placed me amongst his elect. Glory to thee, my much-adored lover!' Then, radiant in her bliss, she stooped over him and touched with her lips, perfumed with immortality, the lips of the ecstatic monk, and then their soul exhaled itself in a kiss burning like love, chaste as virtue, immense as eternity."[1]

"Oh!" exclaimed Hardy, the prey to complete delirium, "Oh, a whole life of prayers, fastings, tortures, for such a moment with her I love, her I weep for, with her whom perhaps I have damned—"

"What do you say? Such a moment?" exclaimed Rodin, whose parchment-coloured skull was bathed with sweat, like that of a magnetiser, and taking Hardy by the hand in order to approach him more closely, as if he would have inflated him with the burning delirium in which he sought to plunge him. "It was not once in his religious life, but almost daily, that M. de Rancey, plunged into the ecstasy of a divine asceticism, tasted these deep, unutterable, unheard-of, superhuman pleasures, which are to terrestrial pleasures what eternity is to human life."

Seeing, no doubt, that Hardy had reached the point he desired, and the night being almost set in, the reverend father coughed twice or thrice in a significant manner, and looked towards the door. At this moment Hardy, at the height of his delirium, exclaimed, in a supplicating, maddened tone:

[1] It would be impossible to quote in support of this, even with any omissions, the lucubrations of the erratic delirium of Sister Thérèse, in her account of her ecstatic love for Christ. These diseases could only find place in a dictionary of medical science or in the "Compendium." (A work directed by the Jesuits. — *Eng. Trans.*) — E. S.

"A cell — a tomb — and ecstasy with her — "

The door of the chamber opened, and D'Aigrigny entered with a cloak on his arm. A servant followed him with a light in his hand.

About ten minutes after this scene, a dozen stout men, with honest, open countenances, headed by Agricola, entered the Rue de Vangirard, and bent their joyous steps towards the door of the house of the reverend fathers.

It was a deputation of the former workmen of M. Hardy, who came to fetch and thank him for consenting again to come amongst them. Agricola walked at their head. Suddenly he saw at a distance a post-carriage leave the *maison de retraite*, the horses going at a rapid pace and being urged by the postilion.

Chance or instinct, the closer this carriage approached the party, the more Agricola's mind became uneasy. The feeling became so strong that it grew at once into a terrible assurance, and at the instant when the chariot, with all its blinds closed, was about to pass him, the smith, yielding to an insurmountable presentiment, cried, as he darted to the horses' heads:

"My lads, follow me."

"Postilion — ten louis — gallop — crush him under the wheels!" uttered the military voice of D'Aigrigny from behind the blind.

The cholera was at this time raging at its height, the postilion had heard of the murder of the poisoners, and, already alarmed at Agricola's sudden assault, he gave him such a heavy blow with the handle of his whip on the head that he felled the smith to the ground, then, spurring and urging his horses to a top speed, the carriage speedily disappeared, whilst Agricola's companions, who had neither comprehended his motive nor his action, came around, and tried to restore the smith to animation.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE.

VARIOUS occurrences had taken place during the short interval which had elapsed since the fatal evening when M. Hardy, bewildered and brought almost to the verge of madness by the highly wrought state of mind and strong mental excitement induced by the artful representations of Rodin, had with clasped hands implored D'Aigrigny to remove him far from Paris, and to conduct him to some lonely solitude where, shut out from all communication with the world, he could devote himself both in body and mind to devotional exercises and severe corporeal penance and mortification.

Maréchal Simon, since his arrival in Paris, had taken up his abode with his daughters in a plain, unpretending abode, situate in the Rue des Trois Frères. But before introducing the reader within its humble walls, we must briefly recall several circumstances to the mind of the reader.

On the day on which the fire occurred at the manufactory of M. Hardy, Maréchal Simon had gone thither for the purpose of consulting his father on an affair of the deepest importance, as well as to confide to him the painful apprehensions he entertained concerning the increasing melancholy of his two daughters, the cause of which he sought in vain to penetrate.

It may also be recollected that Maréchal Simon professed an almost religious adoration for the memory of the emperor; his gratitude towards his hero and idol had

been as boundless as his confidence was blind and unlimited, while his enthusiastic affection partook of all the deep fervour of the sincerest and most devoted friendship.

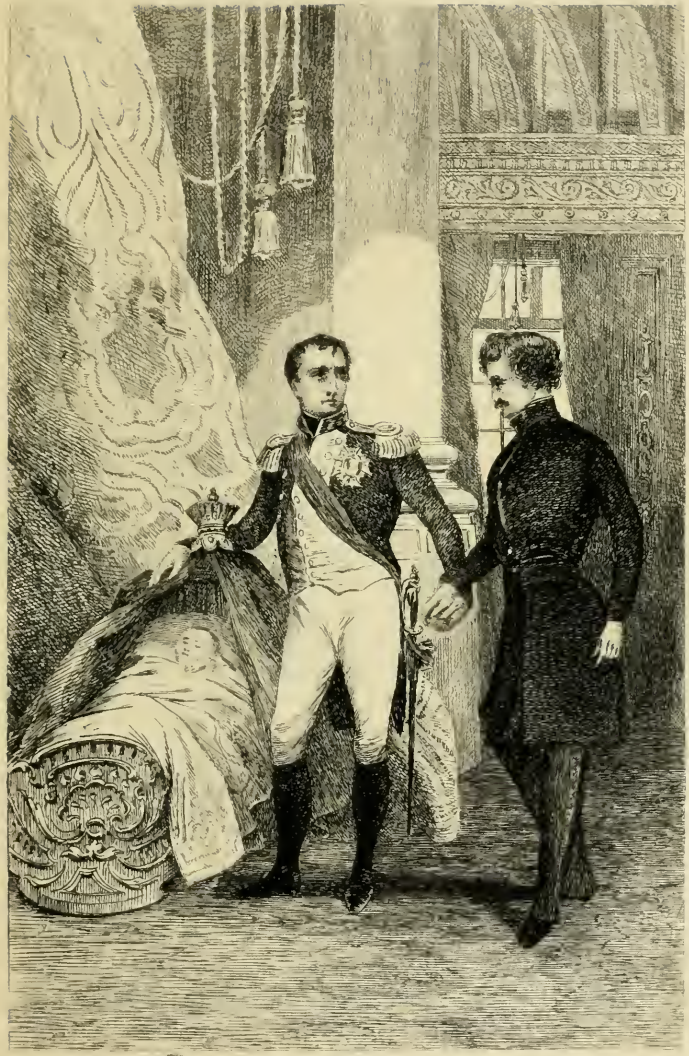
Nor was this all.

One day the emperor, in a burst of happiness and paternal tenderness, conducted the maréchal to the cradle of his sleeping infant, the young King of Rome, and, after fondly pointing out the exquisite beauty of the slumbering boy, said to him, in tones of deep emotion:

"Here, my friend, here by the side of this sweet cherub, promise me to be to the son all you have been to the father. Nay, swear!"

Maréchal Simon had both taken and kept the prescribed oath.

At the head of a military conspiracy, he had attempted during the Restoration, but in vain, to persuade a regiment of horse, then commanded by the Marquis d'Aigrigny, to join the cause of Napoleon II., but betrayed, and then denounced by the future Jesuit, the maréchal, after a sanguinary encounter with his enemy, fled into Poland, thereby alone escaping condemnation and death. It is useless recapitulating all the events which conducted the maréchal from Poland to India, and again restored him to Paris after the Revolution of July, — a period at which many of his companions in arms, unknown to himself, solicited and obtained the confirmation of the rank and title bestowed on him by the emperor previously to the battle of Waterloo. Upon his return to Paris, after so long an absence, the maréchal, spite of the happiness he felt in embracing his children, had suffered a severe shock in learning the death of his wife, to whom he was most passionately attached. Up to the very last moment, he had expected to meet her in Paris, and the disappointment struck to his heart, though he strove by every mental effort to forget his cruel, though unavailing regrets, in the gentle caresses and tender consolation of



his young and innocent daughters. And, ere long, the fiendish machinations of Rodin added still more to the trouble and agitation which already distracted his soul.

Owing to the secret correspondence kept up by Rodin with the court of Vienna, one of his creatures, deserving of all confidence by his previous conduct, and substantiating his words still more by the most irrefragable proofs that he came from those whose authority he quoted, applied to the maréchal, saying:

"The son of our emperor is dying, a victim to the dread with which the name of his father still inspires Europe; and from this slow, lingering agony, you, Maréchal Simon, one of the most faithful friends and adherents of the emperor, may possibly be enabled to snatch the unfortunate prince. The correspondence I lay before you clearly proves that it will be both practicable and easy to establish a direct communication with the most powerful and influential personage about the King of Rome, and that this person would be favourably disposed to aid the escape of the prince. It is, then, quite possible, by means of a bold and unexpected attempt, to rescue Napoleon II. from Austria, where he is permitted to languish and waste away in an atmosphere chilling and vitally mortal to one of his delicate organisation. The enterprise is a bold, but not a hopeless one; it presents even a fair chance of success, — a success more likely to be achieved by you than another, since your devotion to the emperor is well known, and the daring bravery with which, in 1815, you joined the various conspiracies in favour of Napoleon II. is fresh in the memory of all."

The state of wasting languor in which the young King of Rome then lay was well known in France; public rumour even went so far as to affirm that the son of the hero was carefully and studiously brought up by the priests in complete ignorance of all the glory his father had achieved, and that by a vile plot they endeavoured each

day to repress and extinguish the noble and generous sentiments which so early manifested themselves in the unhappy youth; and even the coldest and most calculating natures were touched and moved at so mournful and unpromising a destiny.

When the heroic character, the chivalrous loyalty of Maréchal Simon is considered, in conjunction with his enthusiastic admiration of the emperor, it will easily be seen that the father of Rose and Blanche would be more deeply interested than any one in the fate of the young prince; and that, upon a fitting occasion, the maréchal would not confine the demonstration of his zeal and affection to a few empty professions or useless regrets.

As regarded the genuineness of the correspondence exhibited by the emissary of Rodin, it had been indirectly submitted by the maréchal to a rigid test by the means of some old connections of his, who had for many years been diplomatically employed at the court of Vienna during the time of the empire. The result of this investigation, which was, however, managed with the greatest caution for fear of exciting suspicion, served to prove that the overtures made to him merited his serious attention.

From hence arose the severe struggles and cruel perplexity which disturbed the father of Rose and Blanche; since, were he to undertake the bold and dangerous enterprise pointed out to him, he must, perforce, quit his daughters; while if, too much pained at the idea of a separation from his only treasures, he shrunk from endeavouring to save the King of Rome, whose severe sufferings and fast failing health were known and admitted by all, he became, in his own opinion, a renegade and a traitor to the promise made by him to the emperor.

To end these painful and conflicting hesitations, and full of trust and reliance on the inflexible integrity of his father, the maréchal had gone to seek his advice on the very day of the attack on M. Hardy's manufactory;

but the mortal wound received by the old republican workman had prevented his doing more than to utter, in broken and disjointed sentences, as his half benighted brain still dwelt on the affair his son had communicated to him:

"My son, — you have a great and serious duty — to perform; and to fail in it would be unworthy a man of honour, — and, as you would — wish to — obey my dying — commands — you — must — unhesitatingly — " and with these feebly uttered words, the old man expired; but by a deplorable fatality, the remaining part of the sentence, so necessary to give force and meaning to the whole, escaped in faint, unintelligible sounds; so that his death left Maréchal Simon even more embarrassed than he had been before, and a prey to an anxiety so much the more poignant as the path he should take to escape from his perplexing labyrinth had been decided on by his father, in whose judgment he had the most absolute and well-merited reliance. He passed his hours in trying to divine his parent's meaning, — whether his father had adjured him, in the sacred name of honour and of duty, not to quit his children, and to renounce a too hazardous enterprise, or if it had been intended to counsel him unhesitatingly to abandon his daughters for a time, in order that he might fulfil the vow made to the emperor, and endeavour, at least, to snatch Napoleon II. from his mortal captivity.

This perplexity, rendered still more painful by circumstances we shall narrate hereafter, the poignant grief occasioned by the sudden and violent death of his tenderly beloved parent, the unceasing and torturing anguish resulting from the recollection of his adored wife's having died far from him in a land of exile, added to the unhappiness he felt at the daily increasing sadness of Rose and Blanche, made fearful inroads into the health and energy of Maréchal Simon. Let it be further remarked, that, spite of his natural intrepidity, so bravely

manifested during twenty years spent in war, the ravages of the cholera — that terrible malady to which his wife had fallen a victim in Siberia — created a sort of involuntary dread in the mind of the man who, during so many hard-fought battles, had coolly looked on death, yet who now felt his habitual firmness fail him at the sight of the desolation and misery he encountered at every step in Paris.

Meanwhile, Mlle. de Cardoville had contrived to assemble around her the various members of her family, with the view of putting them on their guard against the machinations of their enemies, and the affectionate tenderness lavished by her on Rose and Blanche appeared to exercise so happy an influence on their mysterious melancholy that the maréchal, forgetting for awhile his painful subjects of thought, gave himself up to the dear delight of enjoying this gratifying change, — a change, alas! but of too short a duration.

These circumstances recalled to the recollection of our readers, and the requisite explanations given, we will now proceed with our recital.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JOCRISSE.

Marechal Simon occupied, as we have already said, a quiet, unpretending mansion in the Rue des Trois Frères. Two o'clock, midday, had just struck on the clock in the maréchal's bedchamber, a room furnished with a simplicity entirely military. At the head of the bed was a stand of arms composed of the various accoutrements worn by the maréchal during his several campaigns; while on the bookcase, which faced the bed, was a small bronze bust of the emperor, the only ornament the apartment contained.

The temperature without the chamber was far from being warm, and the maréchal, from his long residence in India, was particularly sensitive of cold; a good fire, therefore, was blazing on the hearth. A door, concealed by the hangings of the room, and communicating with a back staircase, slowly opened, and a man appeared bearing a basket of wood; this individual advanced slowly till he reached the fireplace, when, stooping down, he began to arrange the blocks of wood in symmetrical order in a large box placed a little way from the fire; after pursuing his occupation for several minutes, the man, still on his knees, continued insensibly to approach a second door, not far from the chimneypiece, where he appeared to listen with profound attention, as if desirous of ascertaining whether any person was speaking in the adjoining apartment.

This man, employed throughout the house as a sort of supernumerary servant, had the most ridiculously stupid aspect that can be imagined; his duties consisted in carrying wood to the different rooms, going of errands, etc.; moreover, he served as a jest and make-game for every domestic in the house. In a momentary fit of gaiety, Dagobert, who exercised in the house a sort of majordomo capacity, had bestowed on the idiotic fellow the name of Jocrisse, which he had ever afterwards retained, and certainly never was *sobriquet* better placed as regarded the stupidity of the man, with his flat, unmeaning face, great snub nose, and large, dull, fishy-looking eyes; add to this a dress consisting of the usual nether garments, and a red serge waistcoat, finished off with a white bib belonging to an apron of the same colour, and the reader may form some idea of the simpleton so aptly and justly named Jocrisse. Nevertheless, as the man crouched down before the door of the adjoining chamber, and seemed to be paying such close attention to what might be passing within, a bright sparkle of intelligence shone in those eyes usually so dull and stupid.

After having thus listened for an instant or two at the door, Jocrisse returned to the fireplace, still drawing himself along on his knees; then rising, he took his basket, half filled as it was with wood, and again approached the door before which he had been listening, and gently tapped at it. No one answered him. A second time he knocked, and more boldly; still no reply. Then speaking in a voice as hoarse, squeaking, grating, and ridiculous as can be imagined, he said:

"Please, young ladies, are you in any want of wood for your chimbley, if you please?"

Receiving no answer, Jocrisse put down his basket, opened the door softly, and entered the adjoining chamber; after casting a rapid glance around, in two or three seconds he came out again, looking anxiously from side

to side, like a person who had just accomplished some very important and mysterious thing. Resuming his wood-basket, he was just preparing to quit the maréchal's bedchamber, when the door leading to the back staircase again slowly and cautiously opened, and Dagobert appeared there.

Evidently surprised at the presence of Jocrisse, the old soldier frowned angrily, and abruptly inquired, "What are you doing there?"

At this sudden demand, accompanied by a deep growl, arising out of the ill-humour which at that moment affected Killjoy, who was closely following his master, Jocrisse uttered a cry of terror, real or affected; if the latter, he, by way of giving greater effect to his emotion, contrived to upset his load of wood on the floor, as though fear or surprise had caused it to slip from his hands.

"What are you doing there, booby?" pursued Dagobert, whose countenance bore marks of extreme sadness, and as though his present turn of mind was ill calculated to relish the foolery of Jocrisse.

"Ah, M. Dagobert, how you did frighten me, to be sure! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a pity I was not carrying a pile of plates, just that I might have had the pleasure of proving that it was not my fault that they were all thrown down and broken!"

"I ask you what you were doing there?" persisted Dagobert.

"Why, M. Dagobert, it's pretty plain what I was a doing, — just look'ee there," pointing to his basket. "I have just been bringing wood into the chamber of my lord duke, 'cos, says I, if he's cold, and wants to warm hisself, if he hasn't got no wood, why, he can't burn it! And I'm sure, it is downright cold, and no mistake, — indeed, according as I hear say —"

"There, that will do, — pick up your things, and be off with you."

"Lord love you, M. Dagobert, my legs quite tremble

under me. Dear, dear me, what a fright you gave me surely!"

"Will you take yourself out of the way, you great, stupid brute?"

Then taking Jocrisse by the arm, he pushed him against the door, while Killjoy, laying back his sharp pointed ears, and bristling up his coat like the quills of a porcupine, evinced every disposition to accelerate the retreat of the idiotic-looking being.

"I'm a-going, M. Dagobert, — bless your dear heart, I'm a-going," replied the simpleton, hastily picking up his basket; "but will you have the goodness just to mention to M. Killjoy, that I'd rather — if he pleases —"

"Go to the —— with you, you chattering old fool!" cried Dagobert, turning Jocrisse out of the apartment. The old man then bolted the door of the back staircase withinside, and, proceeding to that which led to the chamber of the sisters, turned the key in the lock. This done, the soldier hastily approached the alcove, and took down from the panoply of arms suspended at the head, a pair of loaded pistols, from which he carefully removed the percussion-caps, then, with a deep sigh, he returned them to their original place; he was leaving the spot, when, as if actuated by some fresh idea, he again extended his hand towards the stand of arms, and took from it an Indian kandjiar (or poniard, with an extremely sharp and pointed blade), drew it from its golden sheath, and broke off the end of this deadly weapon by pressing it beneath one of the iron castors which supported the bed. Dagobert then unfastened the doors he had previously secured, and returned with slow and lingering steps towards the fireplace, leaning his arm on the mantelpiece, with an air at once pensive and dejected; while Killjoy, stretched out before the fire, followed, with an attentive eye, the least movement of his master, — the noble brute even sought to attract his attention by a fresh proof of the wonderful sagacity

with which he was endowed, for the old soldier, in drawing out his pocket-handkerchief, unconsciously let fall a small roll of tobacco.

Killjoy, who fetched and carried like a retriever of the Rutland breed, took the paper up, and holding it between his teeth seated himself on his hind legs, and, with all possible respect and attention, presented it to Dagobert, who, wholly absorbed in his deep and painful ruminations, took it mechanically, without seeming to feel either pleasure or interest in the cleverness of his faithful dog.

The countenance of the old man expressed as much grief as anxiety, and, after remaining for some time beside the fire in the same meditative attitude, he began pacing the room in extreme agitation, one hand thrust into the bosom of his long blue greatcoat buttoned up to the chin, the other in one of the back pockets.

From time to time Dagobert suddenly paused, and, as if in reply to his secret thoughts, uttered aloud some exclamation of doubt or surprise; then, turning towards the pile of military trophies, he mournfully shook his head as he murmured:

"No matter! Very possibly my fear is unfounded and absurd; but still he has been so very strange during the last two days. At any rate it is more prudent." And again resuming his march up and down the apartment, Dagobert said, after a fresh and prolonged silence, "I must make him tell me what it is that thus presses on his mind. He makes me too unhappy to be able longer to bear it in silence. And then, again, when I think of those dear girls, it almost breaks my heart."

And, with these words, Dagobert rapidly smoothed his moustache between his thumb and forefinger with an almost convulsive movement, which, in him, was invariably the index of some powerful internal agitation.

After another pause of several minutes, the old soldier, as though replying to some inward thought, exclaimed:

"What can it be, if not that? Surely not more anonymous letters? They are too base and unworthy to be capable of thus changing him. No, no, he despises all that sort of mean, cowardly, fighting-in-the-dark work! I'm sure he does. No, no, there is some other reason for all his misery; and that reason I must and will find out."

And, as if wound up to fresh excitement, Dagobert began pacing the room more energetically than ever.

Suddenly Killjoy pricked up his ears, turned his head in the direction of the back staircase, and growled fiercely.

A few minutes afterwards some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" inquired Dagobert.

No reply was given, but the knocking was repeated.

Irritated and impatient, the old soldier hastily opened the door, and beheld the stolid countenance of Jocrisse.

"What the —— do you mean," asked the angry soldier, "by not answering when I spoke to you?"

"M. Dagobert, if you please, I was afraid, because, you know as you sent me away just now, I was in fear of making you angry if I told you it was me come back again!"

"And what have you come for? What do you want? But don't stand staring there, you gaping fool, if you have any business to do. Be quick, and take your stupid carcass out of my way. Do you hear me, you lout? Why don't you move one way or the other? Then I'll make you!" added Dagobert, wrought up to a paroxysm of fury, and forcibly dragging Jocrisse into the midst of the chamber, finding the man persisted in remaining on the threshold of the door.

"I'm a-coming! I'm a-coming directly, I am, M. Dagobert! Pray don't be so very cross to me, you make me ill; you do, indeed, when you speak. I always was afraid of thunder, when I was quite a little boy, and

ever since. There, there, now don't fly out again, I'm a-going to speak directly I can get my words together. I came, M. Dagobert, to tell you — oh, dear me, how I do tremble! — that there was a young man — "

"Well?"

"Who says he wants to speak to you directly, M. Dagobert, if you please, sir."

"And what is his name?"

"Ah, now I know you are laughing at me, M. Dagobert," answered Jocrisse, twisting himself about with a silly and idiotic look and manner. "When you ask me his name, then I'm sure you are mocking of me!"

"Why, you half brained simpleton, you seem determined to make me shake the wretched breath out of your body! Come, come, no more of this fool's nonsense, or I shall be as good as my word," cried the soldier, seizing Jocrisse by the collar. "Will you tell me the name of this young man, or must I shake it out of you?"

"M. Dagobert, you hurt me! Please take your knuckles out of my throat, and I'll tell you all I know. I will, indeed; only don't look so horrid and speak so violent. As for the name of the young man, I thought it was not worth while mentioning it, as you know it already as well or better than myself."

"Oh, you brute, beast!" exclaimed Dagobert, shaking his fists in his face. "I'll make you remember crossing my path with your cock and bull tales, when I'm so little in the humour to have patience with you or myself either. What do you mean by saying I know the name of this young man?"

"Well, la! I beg pardon, I'm sure. It was my mistake; only I thought it most likely you did, as it was your own son! He's down below, and he says he wants to see you, and speak to you about something very particular, this very identical minute."

So well did Jocrisse enact his part of simpleton that

Dagobert was completely deceived by it; and pitying, rather than resenting, the folly of the man, he looked for an instant searchingly into his countenance, but, finding nothing in the utter stolidity of Jocrisse's face to arouse his suspicions, he merely shrugged his shoulders, and, directing his steps towards the staircase, contented himself with saying to the man:

"Follow me!"

Jocrisse obeyed; but, before closing the door after him, he felt in his pocket, drew from it a letter with a cautious and mysterious air, which he threw behind him; then, without turning his head, and speaking all the while to Dagobert to divert his attention, he said:

"Your son is in the courtyard, M. Dagobert; he wouldn't come up, he said — so, I take it, that's the reason he stayed down-stairs."

So saying, Jocrisse shut the door, believing the letter lay where he left it, namely, on the floor in Maréchal Simon's bedchamber. But Jocrisse had not included Killjoy in his calculations. Whether he considered it more prudent to bring up the rear, or whether from respectful deference to the two-legged animal who preceded him, the sagacious dog had not chosen to quit the room till all had departed but himself; and, as he was extraordinarily clever at fetching and carrying (as has been already stated), when he saw Jocrisse drop the letter, he took it carefully up, and, holding it between his teeth, followed the man who had thrown the paper on the ground, without his having the least suspicion of this fresh act of intelligence and good manners on the part of Killjoy.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE ANONYMOUS CORRESPONDENTS.

We shall hereafter relate what became of the letter so cleverly conveyed in the jaws of Killjoy, as well as his reason for not following his master when the latter ran to welcome his dear Agricola.

Dagobert had seen nothing of his son for several days, and first cordially and affectionately welcoming him, he led him into the two chambers on the ground floor assigned as his residence.

"And how is your wife?" inquired the old soldier, as soon as they were seated.

"Thank you, father, she is quite well."

The tone in which Agricola replied to his father's question was so unlike his natural manner of speaking that Dagobert involuntarily raised his eyes to his face, and, for the first time, observed the powerful emotion depicted on his features.

"What is the matter, my boy?" asked the anxious parent. "Has anything new or unfortunate occurred since I saw you last?"

"Father," answered the young smith, in despairing accents, "all is over, — he is lost to us for ever!"

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of M. Hardy!"

"M. Hardy! Why, three days ago you told me that you were going to see him by his own wish."

"And I did go, father, in company with my dear and excellent brother, Gabriel. We both had an interview

with him, and Gabriel talked to him — oh, in such a way, it would have melted a stone, till at length, by his animating and encouraging words, M. Hardy was brought to declare his intention of returning to us all again. Quite wild with joy, I ran to convey the happy tidings to some of my companions, who were waiting to know the result of my conference with M. Hardy, and they all hurried back with me to thank and bless their kind benefactor for thus restoring them to happiness and employment. We were within about a hundred steps of the black gownsmen's house, when — "

"You mean priests, I suppose," said Dagobert, with a gloomy air. "Ah, I thought they must needs be concerned wherever evil and mischief were going on. Come, let's hear what fresh misfortunes occurred; something fatal, I'm sure. I know those religious mischief-makers too well!"

"You are not mistaken in this case certainly, father," said Agricola, with a sigh. "Well, as I said before, I was hurrying with my comrades, when, all at once, I perceived a travelling carriage approach from the priests' house, and an indescribable impression came over my mind that they were carrying off M. Hardy."

"Do you mean by force?" asked Dagobert, eagerly.

"Oh, no!" replied Agricola, bitterly; "these men are too clever and cunning for that. They always find some means or other of rendering you a willing instrument in their guilty hands — a voluntary aider and abettor in your own ruin. I have not forgotten how they went to work with my dear mother."

"Ah, poor woman! She was another unhappy fly caught in their treacherous, poisoned net. But what of the carriage you were telling me about?"

"As I saw it drive from the priests' house," said Agricola, "a pang shot through my heart, and, by an impulse I felt it impossible to restrain, I sprung to the horses' heads, calling upon my companions to aid me,

but the postilion aimed a blow at me with his whip, which stretched me senseless on the ground, and by the time I recovered myself the vehicle was far off."

"But you received no serious injury, my son, I trust!" exclaimed Dagobert, eagerly, whilst he attentively and anxiously surveyed Agricola.

"No, dear father; the blow had merely stunned me, and I escaped with a slight scratch or a bruise."

"And what did you do next, my lad?"

"Why, I made all possible haste to our guardian angel, Mlle. de Cardoville, and related to her all that had occurred. 'You must follow M. Hardy instantly,' said she, when I had concluded my tale. 'You shall have one of my travelling carriages with post-horses. M. Dupont will accompany you, and you will pursue M. Hardy from stage to stage, and if you are fortunate enough to overtake him, it is possible that your presence and entreaties may overcome the fatal influence these priests have obtained over him.'"

"The excellent young lady was quite right. It was the very best thing that you could do."

"An hour after that we were on M. Hardy's track, for we learnt, by some return postilions we met, that he had taken the road to Orleans. We followed as far as Estampes, where we heard that he had gone, by a cross-road, towards a lone house, situated in a valley about four leagues from the highroad; that this house was called the Vale of St. Herem, and belonged to the priests. But the night was so dark and the roads so very bad, that we were counselled to sleep at the inn, and depart upon our search at break of day; and this advice we determined to follow. Directly it was light we started off again, and, after proceeding for about a quarter of an hour by the road, we quitted it for a by-path, as precipitous as dreary and desolate. Nothing was to be seen but immense blocks of graystone, with a few birch-trees and stunted shrubs scattered over them. As we advanced. the aspect

of the country became still more wild and dreary. You might easily suppose yourself one hundred leagues from Paris. At length we stopped before a large, dark-looking old mansion, built at the declivity of a high mountain, covered with patches of the graystone which I mentioned to you abounded so much in the neighbourhood. There were scarcely any windows in this gloomy abode, and what there were were so small and high that the inmates could never, by any possibility, guess what was passing without. Never, during my life, have I seen anything so lonely and dismal-looking. We alighted and rang at the bell, which was promptly answered by a man-servant. 'Did not the Abbé d'Aigrigny arrive here last night with another gentleman?' I asked, with an air of extreme intelligence. 'Let that gentleman know that I wish to see him directly upon an affair of great importance, and that I beg he will allow me to state my business to him without delay.' The man believing, of course, that we belonged to the Abbé d'Aigrigny's party, allowed us to enter. In about a minute a door opened, and the Abbé d'Aigrigny appeared. At sight of me he started back and retreated as quickly as he had come; but in about five minutes' time I was in M. Hardy's presence."

"Well!" said Dagobert, anxiously; "then I suppose you made it all right?"

Agricola mournfully shook his head, then resumed:

"I saw, at the first glance, that all was over with M. Hardy; the expression of his features told me that plainly enough. Addressing himself to me, in a voice gentle but firm, M. Hardy said, 'I can both understand and excuse the motive that brings you here, but I have finally resolved to pass the remainder of my life in retirement and devotion. I take this determination willingly and of my own free will, uninfluenced by any person, because I believe my immortal happiness and the state of my soul require it. Bear my good wishes to your comrades, and say that I have made such a provision for them as will, I trust,

reconcile them to my loss, and secure me a place in their remembrance.' Then, perceiving me about to speak, M. Hardy interrupted me by saying, 'It is all in vain, my good friend, my resolution is fixed and unchangeable. Do not write me, for, if you do, your letters will remain unanswered. My whole attention will, henceforward, be engrossed by prayer and meditation. And now farewell! Excuse my quitting you, but I am much fatigued with travelling.' And he might well refer to his being unhinged and indisposed, whether from travelling or other causes. He was pale as a spectre, and there even seemed to me a sort of wandering and wildness in his eyes. In fact, he was scarcely like the same person I had seen and conversed with only the day previously, while the hand he held out to me was parched and burning. The Abbé d'Aigrigny now entered. 'Father,' said M. Hardy to him, 'will you do me the favour to conduct M. Agricola Baudoin to the door?' With these words he waved his hand to me, in token of an eternal adieu, and entered an adjoining chamber. All was now over, and he for ever and irrevocably lost to the world and those who loved him as I did."

"I see," said Dagobert, "these black-coated priests have bewitched him, as they have done so many others."

"So then," said Agricola, "I returned home in utter despair in company with M. Dupont. See, now, what these priests have made of M. Hardy, the generous individual who maintained nearly three hundred workmen, and induced them, by the excellence of his system, to live an industrious, orderly life, cultivating their intelligence, improving their hearts, and rendering himself, by his wise and beneficent conduct towards them, well worthy of the blessings they daily, nay hourly, invoked on his head. Instead of all this useful benevolence, M. Hardy has now for ever devoted himself to a silent, solitary life, useless to himself as well as to all around him."

"Oh, these priests," said Dagobert, shuddering, and

unable to conceal an undefinable dread he felt creeping over him; "the more I know of them, the more they inspire me with fear. You saw how those black hypocrites turned and twirled your poor mother's mind, till, unconsciously to herself, she was made to aid in their vile projects. Now, you see to what they have brought M. Hardy. You are aware of their infamous schemes against my two poor orphans, as well as that noble-minded, generous young lady. Oh, those men are cunning as the devil himself, and I tell you honestly, Agricola, I had much rather face a squadron of Russian grenadiers than a dozen of those cassocks. Don't let us talk of them any more. I have plenty of other causes for fear and uneasiness without them."

Then, observing the surprise imprinted on Agricola's expressive features, the old soldier, unable longer to restrain his emotion, threw himself into his son's arms, crying, in a hurried, agitated voice:

"I can bear it no longer! My heart overflows, and in whom can I repose my sorrows and my confidence, if not in you, my son?"

"You terrify me, father," said Agricola. "What has happened?"

"I tell you, my boy, that, only for you and those two poor orphan girls, I should have been tempted, twenty times over, to blow my brains out, rather than to see what I see, and, above all, to fear what I fear!"

"And what is it you do fear, dear father?"

"I know not what has been the matter with the maréchal; but, for several days past, he has alarmed me greatly!"

"Yet his recent conversations with Mlle. de Cardoville —"

"Certainly did him good, and, for a time, he appeared considerably improved in spirits and manner. The generous young lady seemed, by her kind and soothing words, to have poured healing balm into his wounds. And the

presence of the young Indian had also served to divert his thoughts. He appeared less gloomy, less melancholy, and his poor children enjoyed all the good effects of so blessed a change; but for several days past it seems as though some demon were let loose afresh to distract and torment the whole family; it well-nigh turns my brain, and I feel almost certain that the sending of anonymous letters, which had been discontinued, has again commenced." [1]

"What letters do you allude to, father?"

"The anonymous ones."

"And what is the purport of these letters?"

"You are aware of the hatred the maréchal previously entertained for that renegade, Abbé d'Aigrigny. When he learnt that the traitor was here, and that he had pursued the orphan children with the same bitter and implacable enmity he had manifested towards their unfortunate mother, hunting her even to death, but that he had become a priest, and, consequently, escaped from his vengeance, I thought the maréchal would go mad with rage and indignation. He even threatened to seek out the traitor, the renegade, and pin him to the earth with his sword; but I calmed him with a single word. 'He has turned priest, remember,' said I, 'and you may cross his path, insult, or even strike him, but he will neither return your blow nor meet you like a man. He

[1] It is well known how familiar the reverend fathers, as well as other sects, are with the employment of denunciating threats and anonymous slander. The venerable Cardinal de Latour d'Auvergne has complained recently, in a letter addressed to the different journals, of the disgraceful attacks and numerous anonymous letters with which he has been assailed, because he refused a blind and unqualified obedience to the prohibition of M. de Bonald against the "Manuel" of M. Dupin, a work which, spite of party or priesthood, will for ever remain a compendium of reason, right, and independence. We have now before us the particulars, nay, the very documents, of an action at law, referred even to the *conseil d'état*, in which were produced a considerable number of anonymous letters, addressed to an aged man the priests were desirous of getting into their clutches, containing the most fearful threats if he did not disinherit his nephews, as well as the most abominable accusations and imputations against each member of his honourable family. It further came out on the trial that these anonymous letters were the productions of two priests and a professed nun, who never quitted the old man, even in his last moments, and ultimately succeeded in despoiling the family of more than five hundred thousand francs.

began by fighting against his country, and he finishes by becoming a wicked and hypocritical priest. Trust me, he is not worthy of being spit upon or spurned with your foot!' 'Still, still,' exclaimed the exasperated maréchal, 'I cannot rest till I have at once avenged my children's wrongs and my wife's death.' 'You must remember,' said I again, 'that you have been assured that there are laws and tribunals in France capable of punishing him as he deserves. Mlle. de Cardoville has already lodged a complaint against him for having illegally, and with evil intent, confined your children in a convent. We must, therefore, wait in patience, but our revenge will only be the more certain.'"

"Yes, father, you were right in urging all this to the poor maréchal; but, unfortunately, there are no direct proofs against the Abbé d'Aigrigny. Why, only the other day, when Mlle. de Cardoville's solicitor questioned me respecting our going to the convent that night, he told me plainly that he found fresh difficulties every step he advanced in the affair, for want of positive and material proofs, and that the priests had taken their measures so skilfully that he fully expected the charge would fall to the ground!"

"That is precisely the maréchal's own opinion, my lad; and the idea of so flagrant an injustice irritates him still more."

"It is a pity he cannot view the conduct of these unprincipled men with the contempt it deserves!"

"And the anonymous letters, also. Would you despise them also?"

"Father, I do not understand your reference to these letters."

"Then listen, while I explain the whole matter to you. Brave and generous-minded as is the maréchal, when his first burst of indignation had passed away, he considered that to chastise the renegade as he deserved, now he had converted his military garb into a priest's frock,

would be almost as cowardly as to attack a woman or an old man. He therefore endeavoured, as much as possible, to despise and forget the wrongs he had received; but, lo! by every post arrived letters from some concealed writer, endeavouring, by every possible means, to rekindle and excite the anger of the maréchal against the renegade, by recapitulating all the injuries both himself and those dearest to him had received from the Abbé d'Aigrigny; and many bitter taunts and cutting remarks were made on the cowardice of the maréchal, who could allow insults and wrongs, such as he had sustained, to go unpunished, while the persecutor of his wife and children daily indulged in the most insolent jests and contemptuous observations concerning the maréchal, his late wife, and even his children!"

"And have you the least suspicion, father, as to the sender of these letters?"

"None whatever! I think and think, till I go almost out of my senses with puzzling my brain, and all to no purpose."

"They come, doubtless, from the maréchal's enemies, and he has no foes but those priests."

"That is my opinion."

"But what can be the aim and motive of these vile anonymous scrawls?"

"The motive?" exclaimed Dagobert. "Why, that is clear enough. The maréchal is quick, hasty, impetuous, and has a thousand reasons for seeking to revenge them on the renegade. Now he is prevented doing himself justice, and justice from his country he is unable to obtain for want of more positive proofs than he possesses. Thus foiled, then, in what he so deeply thirsted for, he powerfully controlled his feelings, and tried to forget the past; but, behold, each day brings insolently provoking letters, that cannot fail recalling this just hatred on the part of the maréchal, whose sensitive mind is goaded on with insults, abuse, and mockery no man could

stand. I tell you what, my brain is as strong as most people's, but I know this kind of torment would drive me actually mad!"

"It is, indeed, a scheme worthy of hell itself, and one that only a fiend could have concocted."

"And that is not all, either!"

"Not all? Surely the base persecuting of his enemies can go no further?"

"Each day the maréchal receives other letters, but those he does not allow me to see; but, when the first came, he seemed dreadfully affected, and said, in a low voice, 'This is too much — too much! They do not even respect — ' and then, covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the smith, almost disbelieving what he heard; "could any cause make the maréchal weep?"

"I tell you, Agricola," resumed Dagobert, "that, upon the receipt of the letter I was speaking of, he cried like a child!"

"What could those letters have contained, father?"

"I know not. Neither durst I inquire. But he looked so wretched and despairing that my heart seemed ready to burst."

"Alas, tormented and harassed in this merciless way, the life of the maréchal must be a burden to him!"

"And then, again, the sight of his poor children, whom he observes more and more dejected and depressed each day, without it being possible to guess the cause of their unhappiness, added to the recollection of his father expiring in his arms, it is enough to break down one man's fortitude, I should think, eh? Still I feel perfectly persuaded that I do not yet know all the maréchal's causes of suffering. There is something, even worse than I have related to you, which preys on his mind, and drives him nearly to desperation. He is completely altered, both in looks, character, and manner, and for

the last few days he has given way to the most violent bursts of passion and fury without any cause or reason that even he could assign. Indeed," continued the old soldier, after a brief hesitation, "I know I may trust you, my son, and therefore I will candidly confess that, in consequence of my fears, I have just now been to the maréchal's apartment for the purpose of removing the caps from his pistols!"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Agricola, infinitely distressed at what he heard, "could you then have dreaded—"

"After the violently excited and exasperated state he was in all yesterday, I dread everything!"

"Why, what occurred then?"

"For some time past he has had long and secret interviews with an individual, whose appearance was that of an old soldier, as well as a brave and worthy sort of man; and I have remarked that the maréchal has always appeared more depressed and agitated after the visits of this person. Two or three times I ventured to remark something of the kind to the maréchal, but, as I saw it displeased him, I did not venture further. Well, this very individual came again in the evening, and staid here till nearly eleven o'clock, even till his wife came to seek him, and waited for him in a hackney-coach at the door. Directly he had left I went up to the maréchal to see if he wanted anything. He looked very pale, but seemed calm; and, when I spoke to him, thanked me, but declined my services, and I went down-stairs again. You know that my bedroom at the side here is directly underneath his, and, for some time after I returned to my chamber, I could hear the maréchal pacing to and fro, as though under the influence of some powerful agitation. At length it seemed as if he were knocking over and throwing the furniture about with violence. Much alarmed, I hurried up-stairs again; but, when I entered the room, he seemed extremely angry with me for coming, and sternly bade me begone

immediately! Seeing him in this state I thought it dangerous to leave him, and accordingly I stopped as if I had not heard what he said. He got into a furious rage, but still I did not offer to go. I only pointed to the table and chair he had thrown down, and which were lying on the ground, with an air so mournful and full of concern that he understood me, and, being one of the best and noblest natures that ever lived, he took my hand, and said, 'Forgive me, my good Dagobert, for paining you thus, but I had, just now, so fierce a rage upon me, that, in a moment's folly, I might have done any desperate act. Nay, I verily believe I should have thrown myself through the window had it been open. I only trust my poor dear little girls did not hear me; but, indeed, my head was quite turned for a time.' Then, going on tiptoe, he walked to the door of the room which led to the sleeping-chamber of his daughters. After anxiously and attentively listening for a minute, he returned to me, saying, 'All is still — thank heaven they sleep!' I then ventured to inquire what had so much disturbed him, and if, spite of all my precautions, he had received another anonymous letter. 'No!' answered he, with a gloomy air, 'I have not! But leave me now, my good friend, I feel better; the sight of you has done me good. So good night, old companion and worthy comrade; retire to your bed and sleep, as I mean to do.' You may be very sure I did not go far off; but, for fear of irritating him, I made believe to go down-stairs, but I walked up again without my shoes, and took my station at the top of the stairs, listening to every sound. No doubt with a view of effectually composing his mind, the maréchal went to look at his sleeping daughters, and, perhaps, bestow a kiss on their innocent foreheads, for I heard the door leading to their apartment open and shut. After his return from their chamber, he continued for a long while to walk up and down his room, but in a calmer manner;

then, as if quite tired out, I heard him throw himself on his bed. I kept my watch, however, till daybreak, and then, finding all remained quiet, I gently stole back to my room, feeling comforted to think that, as far as I could judge, he had passed a tranquil night."

"But what can be the matter with him, dear father?"

"I know no more than you do. But, when I went to him in the morning, I was struck with the change in his countenance, and the bright, unnatural sort of glitter in his eyes. He could not have looked worse if he had been suffering from madness, or a raging fever; then, remembering what he had said the evening previously, that if the window had been open he should have thrown himself out, I thought it would be more prudent to remove the caps from his pistols."

"I cannot understand it," said Agricola; "for a man so firm, so intrepid, and habitually so calm and self-possessed as the maréchal, to have these unaccountable fits of violence, indicates some dark mystery time only can unravel."

"I tell you something most extraordinary is passing in his mind. He has not seen his children for the last two days, which is always a bad sign with him; while the two sweet girls are fretting and pining at the idea of having offended him in some manner, and unconsciously displeased him, and the bare idea of this increases their previous sadness. But for two such angelic beings as they are to give offence to any one is wholly impossible. Ah, if you only knew what a life those dear children lead, — a walk out with me, or a drive in the carriage with the person who has charge of them, for I never allow them to go out alone, and then, upon their return, they attend to their studies, read, or embroider, but always together, till they retire to bed. Their preceptress, whom I believe to be a very worthy woman, told me that she had often been disturbed during the night by hearing them sobbing in their sleep.

Poor children! Thus, in their young lives, certainly they have not enjoyed much happiness," said the soldier, with a sigh.

At this moment, hearing rapid steps in the courtyard, Dagobert looked up, and beheld Maréchal Simon, with pale, distorted features, and half frenzied air, holding in his hands a letter, the contents of which he seemed to read with intense anxiety and extreme agitation.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE GOLDEN CITY.

While Maréchal Simon was pacing the garden with a hasty and agitated step, while engaged in the perusal of the anonymous letter received so singularly through the medium of Killjoy, his daughters sat alone in the apartment they usually occupied, and to which during their temporary absence Jocrisse had paid a brief visit. The poor girls seemed doomed to wear the "livery of woe," for, just as their mourning for their mother terminated, the tragical death of their grandfather again covered them with funereal crape.

The sisters, dressed in deep black, were sitting upon a sofa near their work-table. Grief frequently produces the effect of years, and adds to our outward appearance of age. So it was with Rose and Blanche, a few months had converted them into young women and changed the almost child-like beauty of their fair young faces, once so round and rosy, into pale, lengthened countenances, whose careworn expression rendered it almost impossible to believe they were the same gay, light-hearted beings they had been previous to quitting Siberia. Their large, clear blue eyes were no longer visited by those tears of exuberant joy, caused by their merry laugh either at the amusing coolness and imperturbability of Dagobert, or the mute drollery of old Killjoy, whose pranks frequently enlivened their long and fatiguing pilgrimage. In a word, these charming young creatures, whose soft and delicate loveliness none but the pencil of a Greuze could

have fitly described, were, as they then sat and looked, well worthy of inspiring the melancholy genius of the immortal painter of "Mignon regretting Heaven," or "Marguerite meditating on Faust."

Rose, leaning against the back of the sofa, sat with her head partly drooping on her bosom, over which was crossed a black crape handkerchief, while the light of an opposite window shone full on her pure white forehead, surmounted by a double plaiting of rich chestnut hair; her look was fixed, and the contraction of her finely arched eyebrow evinced the deep preoccupation of her mind; her small, delicate, but thin and wasted hands, still holding the morsel of embroidery with which she had attempted to amuse herself, had fallen listlessly on her lap. The side-face of Blanche was alone visible as she bent forwards to her sister with an expression of tender yet anxious solicitude. Continuing to gaze on her, while she mechanically passed her needle through the canvass she was engaged upon, as though still occupied with her work, "Sister dear!" said Blanche, in a sweet and gentle voice, after waiting a few seconds during which the tears might be seen rapidly gathering in her eyes, "tell me what you are thinking of? You seem so very sad!"

"I was thinking," replied Rose, in a slow tone, and after a short silence, "of the golden city — of our dreams and fancies!"

Blanche comprehended all the bitterness contained in these words, and, without saying another word, she threw her arms around her sister's neck, and burst into tears.

Poor children! The golden city of which they had so long talked and dreamed was Paris and their father, — Paris, the marvellous city of joys and fêtes innumerable; and their imagination had portrayed the smiling, happy countenance of their beloved parent as he welcomed them to the festive scene. But, alas, for them! This gay, golden city had been converted into the drear

abode of grief and tears, death and mourning; the dreadful scourge which had struck their mother in the wilds of Siberia appeared to have followed them like a dark, threatening cloud, and, hovering still over their heads, seemed perpetually to exclude from them the soft blue of the heavens, or the cheering rays of the sun. And the golden city of their fond picturing displayed before their mental view the day when their father should present to them two claimants for their affection, handsome and good as themselves, saying as he did so:

"Here, my children, are hearts worthy of your own; these youths love you as you deserve to be loved. Let each sister, then, bestow a tender and affectionate brother on the other, while, by giving your hand as I direct, I shall be enabled to boast of my sons, as I have hitherto proudly done of my daughters."

And, then, how bright a blush tinged the cheek of the orphans, whose souls, pure as the transparent crystal, had never before reflected any image but that of the angel Gabriel sent by their mother to protect and guard them. It may, therefore, be well imagined with how painful an emotion Blanche heard her sister murmur in bitter sadness those words which so painfully described the difference between their real position and that their imaginations had promised them.

"Alas! dear Rose," said Blanche, wiping away the tears which trickled down her sister's cheek, as she replied, "I was thinking of the golden city we hoped to find; maybe we shall be happy yet, after all!"

"Oh, no," said Rose, "hope it not, sister; for since, though blessed with our father's presence, we find ourselves unhappy, how can we ever hope to be otherwise than wretched?"

"I'll tell you when we shall, dearest Rose," answered Blanche, raising her soft, bright blue eyes to heaven, "we shall be quite — quite happy when we go to rejoin our dear mother; shall we not, think you?"

"And, possibly, the dream we have just had, like the dream we had before, when we were in Germany, is intended to announce to us what is about to happen. Only you know, sister dear, there was this difference, that in Germany we dreamed that the angel Gabriel descended from heaven to come to us; and this time he fetched us from this earth, and carried us to the skies, where our mother was waiting for us."

"Probably this dream will come true, like the other, dear sister; for we dreamed then that the angel Gabriel would protect us, and did he not come and deliver us during the dreadful storm when the ship was wrecked? And this time we dreamed that he took us up to heaven, why should not that also come to pass?"

"Why, you see, sister, that, before he can descend from heaven to take us to our mother, he must first die himself; and it is too dreadful even to think that the dear, good Gabriel who saved us from the tempest should die. I can't bear even to hear you hint at it; let us both kneel down and pray that such a great misfortune may not happen."

"Oh, but that need not happen, because you know that it was not the living Gabriel, but the good angel of that name, whom he so strongly resembles, that we saw in our dream descending from heaven to fetch us."

"Is it not very strange, dear sister, that last night we should both dream exactly alike, just as we did in Germany, where we not only had the same dream, but also the three successive nights we should do so?"

"Yes, indeed, in last night's dream the angel Gabriel seemed to bend over us, saying, in a gentle tone, while he tenderly and compassionately regarded us, 'Come, my children; come, my sisters; your mother awaits you. Poor children,' added he, in a voice full of pity and sadness, 'helpless beings — travellers from afar; you will have traversed the earth innocent and gentle as doves, to find rest at last and for ever in the maternal nest.'"

"These were precisely the angel's words as I heard them in my sleep," answered the other orphan, with a pensive air; "we have never done harm to any one, and we have always loved those who loved us, wherefore, then, should we fear to die?"

"And then, sister, it seemed as though, when the good angel so addressed us, we smiled rather than wept, and we were quite, quite happy when, taking each of us by the hand and unfolding his beautiful white wings, he carried us with him into the clear blue sky —"

"Till we reached the bright heavens where our beloved mother, all bathed in tears, was waiting to receive us."

"Ah, sister," cried Blanche, "depend upon it, such visions as this are not sent for nothing." Then, regarding Rose with a touching smile and a look of mournful intelligence, she added, "And besides, were all that to happen, it would put an end to a great source of sorrow and unhappiness, of which we are unfortunately the cause; you know what I mean."

"Alas, alas! yet how can it be our fault when we love him so very dearly? But now we always appear so frightened and sad in his presence, that very likely he thinks we do not love him at all."

As Rose uttered these words, she took her handkerchief from her small work-basket, that she might wipe away the tears that were rolling rapidly down her pale cheeks; as she raised the handkerchief to her eyes, a paper folded like a letter fell from it on the ground. At this sight, the sisters started with alarm, and, clinging to each other, Rose whispered, in a trembling voice:

"Another of those letters! Oh, I fear to take it up; doubtless it resembles the others we have received."

"Oh, but you know we must not allow it to lie there, for fear of its being seen by any one!" said Blanche, stooping, and carefully picking up the paper, "or else the persons who take so much interest in our welfare might run considerable risk and danger."

"But how could that letter have come there?"

"Nay, how has it happened that so many others have been placed in our way; always when our preceptress is absent from us?"

"True, it is quite useless endeavouring to account for a mystery which it is impossible to find out; but let us read the letter, its contents may probably be more comforting and favourable than the last."

The two sisters then read as follows:

"My dear children, continue to love, to idolise your father, for he is very wretched, and 'tis you who cause his unhappiness; yes, unconsciously and involuntarily you occasion sufferings greater than you can form any idea of; you can never imagine the terrible sacrifices your presence imposes on him; but, alas! he is the victim to his paternal duties, and his torments are greater than ever; be careful, therefore, to spare him all demonstration of your affection and tenderness, since they cause him more pain than pleasure. Every caress you bestow on him pierces his heart like a dagger's point, for in you he sees but the innocent cause of his grief. Still, my dear children, you must not despair, and if you have sufficient self-command not to expose him to the painful ordeal of undergoing your tender words and looks, compel yourselves to be reserved, though affectionate, towards him, and you will thereby assuage and relieve a considerable share of his misery.

"Be secret, let not even the good and worthy Dagobert, who so sincerely loves you, know a word of this; for if you breathe a syllable to any living soul of the contents of this letter, not only your dear father, but your faithful Dagobert and the unknown friend who writes it will be exposed to the most frightful dangers; for your enemies are great, powerful, and numerous.

"So let hope and courage sustain your young hearts, and believe that, if you act as advised, you will soon succeed in purifying your father's tenderness for you of

all grief or sorrow, and then what happiness will be yours! Perhaps that joyful day is nearer than you expect.

"Burn this letter as you did those previously received."

So skilfully was this epistle concocted that, if even the orphans had shown it either to their father or Dagobert, its contents would, at most, have passed for a strange and dangerous sort of interference on the part of some ill-judging person, but still there was nothing to merit any particular censure or reprehension. Nothing could have been more fiendishly worded, when it is recollected how continual a struggle was going on in the mind of the maréchal, between his unwillingness to abandon his so newly found daughters and his shame at failing in what he considered a sacred, an imperative duty to the son of his late benefactor. On the other hand, the tender susceptibility of the sisters having been awakened by the detestable counsel they had received, they soon perceived the mixture of pleasure and pain their presence imposed on their parent; for while at their sweet and innocent aspect he felt it impossible to quit them, yet the recollection of his broken promise to the emperor and unfulfilled duty to the son cast a deep gloom over his manly countenance, and made him abruptly retreat from the affectionate attentions of his loving children as though he feared to trust himself longer in their sweet society.

While the unhappy girls could only interpret these variations and fluctuating conduct according to the fatal explanation contained in the anonymous letters they received, they became painfully aware of one fact, that, by some mysterious motive, beyond their ability to penetrate, their presence was frequently not only troublesome, but even highly vexatious, to their father. And from thence arose the fast increasing melancholy of Rose and

Blanche, and also a description of fear, restraint, and reserve, which, spite of themselves, repressed the outward manifestation of their filial tenderness, — an effect the more to be regretted as the maréchal, deceived on his side by inexplicable appearances and perfidious hints, attributed it to coolness and diminished affection for himself, and at this idea a pang, severe as that of death, shot through his heart, while his fine features betrayed the bitter anguish he endured; and often would he rush in agony to the solitude of his own chamber, there to indulge the burning tears that flowed in streaming torrents down his sunburnt cheeks.

And the poor heart-broken orphans would fold their arms around each other, and mournfully repeat:

"'Tis we who cause our father's wretchedness, 'tis our presence renders him thus miserable."

It may well be imagined what ravages a thought so fixed and unceasing would effect in two young hearts as loving, timid, and ingenuous as those of the orphans; or how could it be expected that they should entertain mistrust of letters which, although anonymous, spoke with respect and veneration of those they themselves believed best and wisest of all created beings, and when the mysterious assurances they continually received as to the painful effect produced by their presence seemed so fully borne out by the conduct of the father towards themselves? Having been already the victims of so many plots, and having, also, repeatedly heard it said that they were surrounded by numerous enemies, it may readily be supposed that, in strict accordance with the recommendations of their unknown friend, they had never confided even to Dagobert those letters in which the soldier was so justly appreciated.

The end of this diabolical scheme was but too evident. In thus harassing the maréchal on all sides, and persuading him of the coolness and indifference of his daughters, it was naturally enough expected that the hesitation he

still felt to abandon his children to engage in a dangerous and uncertain enterprise would render his life so disturbed and embittered that he would hail with pleasure the chance of forgetting his domestic unhappiness in the bustle and excitement of a rash, generous, and chivalric undertaking; such, at least, was the end proposed by Rodin, and, certainly, his scheme was deficient neither in reason nor possibility.

After having perused the letter, the sisters remained perfectly silent for a time, as though too deeply affected to trust themselves to speak. After a considerable pause, Rose, who held the paper, suddenly approached the fireplace, and, throwing the letter on the burning embers, exclaimed, in a timid voice:

"We must not delay destroying this paper, else, you know, dear Blanche, terrible things might happen."

"Alas!" said Blanche, "I scarcely see how any greater afflictions or misfortunes can possibly occur than have already befallen us. Only to think of our occasioning such unhappiness to our beloved father. What can it be that we do, or how do we grieve him?"

"Perhaps, dear Blanche," replied Rose, while tears almost choked her utterance, "perhaps our father is disappointed in us; and although he loves us as the children of our poor mother, whom he so worshipped, still he finds not in us the daughters he had hoped for and imagined. Do you understand me, sister?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Doubtless that it is that so pains and vexes him. You see we are so ignorant, so uncivilised, and awkward, that he is ashamed of us; but yet because he loves us in spite of all these disadvantages, that gives him pain."

"But it is not our fault; our dear mother brought us up as well as she could in the wilds of Siberia."

"And I am sure my father in his heart does not blame us for it — but, as you say, I am sure it gives him pain. And then, you know, if he have friends

whose daughters are beautiful, clever, and accomplished, he cannot help regretting that we are not so likewise."

"Do you recollect when he took us to see our cousin, Mlle. Adrienne, who has been so good and kind to us, how he said, with admiring looks, 'Did you observe, my children, how beautiful Mlle. Adrienne is? What sense, what goodness of heart, and nobleness of mind are united in her, with grace and beauty impossible to surpass!' And he spoke truly. Mlle. de Cardoville looked so lovely, and her voice sounded so sweetly on one's ear, that while gazing on her, or listening to her words, one quite forgot one's own griefs."

"Well, then, depend upon it, Rose, that, when our father compares us either with our cousin or various other young ladies he knows, he feels disappointed and ashamed of us; and it is quite natural that a person beloved and honoured as he is everywhere should wish for children of whom they could feel proud."

Suddenly pressing her hand on her sister's arm, Rose said, in an anxious tone:

"Listen! Listen! I can hear loud talking in my father's room!"

"Oh, yes," replied Blanche, also hearkening, "You are right, — some one is walking hastily, — 'tis my father's step, I am sure."

"How loudly he is speaking! He seems dreadfully angry! Perhaps he will come here!"

And at the thoughts of the coming of their parent, the father who loved and idolised them, the unhappy girls looked at each other in terror.

The sound of angry voices becoming momentarily more distinct and threatening, Rose, pale and trembling, said to her sister:

"Do not let us stay here! Pray, pray, come with me to our bedroom!"

"Why, dear Rose?"

"Because we cannot help hearing all our father

says, and he, most likely, is not aware of our being here."

"You are right — quite right!" returned Blanche, rising quickly from her chair; "come, come, sister!"

"I am quite frightened!" continued Rose; "I never before heard my father speak with so much irritation."

"Sister," exclaimed Blanche, turning deadly pale, and suddenly staying her progress to the adjoining chamber, "it is Dagobert he is so angry with!"

"What can have occurred to cause our father to be so very much displeased?"

"I know not; some fresh misfortune, doubtless. Oh, sister, do not let us stay here any longer. I cannot bear to hear our good Dagobert spoken to in that manner."

The loud noise of some article either thrown down or knocked over in the apartment of their parent so terrified the orphans that, pale and trembling with emotion, they rushed into their bedchamber, and secured the door.

Let us now explain the cause of Maréchal Simon's violent excitement and extreme anger.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE WOUNDED LION.

THIS was the scene whose echoes had so much alarmed Rose and Blanche. Alone, Maréchal Simon, in a state of exasperation difficult to describe, began to walk up and down hastily, his handsome, manly countenance inflamed with anger, his eyes sparkling with indignation, whilst on his broad brow, where the hair was growing gray and cut very short, the very throbbing of the veins might be counted, as they seemed swelling ready to burst. From time to time his thick black moustache was agitated by a convulsive movement like that which agitates the face of an enraged lion; and as a lion wounded, torn, tortured, by a thousand invisible small darts, goes backwards and forwards in his den with fierce agony, so the Maréchal Simon, breathless, excited, walked up and down in his room, as it were, by bounds; sometimes walking slightly bent, as if he was bowed down by the weight of his anger; sometimes, on the contrary, stopping, suddenly becoming erect, crossing his arms over his broad chest, his head elevated, his look threatening, terrible, he seemed to hurl defiance at an invisible foe, whilst he muttered confused exclamations; then he was the man of war and battle in all his intrepid fervour. The maréchal then paused, stamped his foot angrily, went to the mantelpiece, and rang so violently that the cord remained in his hand.

A servant quickly answered this hasty ringing.

"Have you not told Dagobert I wished to speak with him?" he inquired.

"I obeyed your order, my lord duke, but M. Dagobert went with his son to the door of the courtyard, and—"

"Very well!" said the Maréchal Simon, waving his hand quickly and imperiously.

The servant left the room, and his master resumed his hasty strides, violently squeezing in his hand a letter which had been innocently brought to him by Killjoy, who when he saw him come in ran to him to be caressed.

At last the door opened, and Dagobert appeared.

"I have been awaiting you for some time, sir!" said the maréchal, in an irritated tone.

Dagobert more pained than surprised at this fresh display of temper, which he rightly attributed to the extreme excitement in which the maréchal was continually, replied, mildly:

"Excuse me, general, but I went out with my son, and—"

"Read that, sir!" said the maréchal, interrupting him abruptly, and handing him the letter.

Then whilst Dagobert was reading, the maréchal added, with fresh rage, and knocking over a chair as he moved:

"So it would appear, then, that even in my own house there are some wretches; no doubt bribed by those who pursue me with such deadly animosity. Well, sir, have you read it?"

"Another piece of infamy to add to the rest," said Dagobert, calmly, and he threw the letter into the fire.

"The letter is infamous, but it tells the truth," replied the maréchal.

Dagobert looked at him without comprehending his meaning.

The maréchal continued, "And do you know who

brought me this infamous epistle? It would seem as though the devil mingled in the dance, — it was your dog."

"Killjoy?" said Dagobert, greatly astonished.

"Yes," replied the maréchal, with bitterness; "no doubt it was a joke of your invention?"

"I am not in much of a mood for joking, general!" answered Dagobert, more and more sorrowful at the state of irritation in which he saw the maréchal. "I cannot account for this at all. Killjoy fetches and carries very well, no doubt he saw the letter in the house, and picked it up, and —"

"And who left this letter here? Am I, then, surrounded by traitors? You do not keep a vigilant lookout — you in whom I have such confidence —"

"Hear me, general!"

But the maréchal went on without listening:

"What! I have fought for twenty-five years, I have headed armies, I have struggled victoriously against the worst times of exile and proscription, I have resisted the blows of clubs, and am I to be killed by the points of pins? What, persecuted even in my own house! Am I to be beset, tortured at every instant by the workings of some unknown hand? When I say unknown, I mistake. D'Aigrigny — that double-dyed traitor, that renegade — is at the bottom of all this, I am sure. I have but one enemy in the world, and it is that man. There must be an end of this, for it wearies me — it is too much!"

"But, general, remember he is a priest, and —"

"What is it to me if he be a priest? I have seen him handle a sword, and I know how to bring up his soldier's blood into the face of this renegade."

"But, general —"

"I tell you that I must find some one!" exclaimed the maréchal, a prey to violent exasperation; "I tell you it is necessary for me to give a name and shape to

these dark infamies, in order that I may put an end to them. They hem me in on every side, they make my life a hell, as you well know, and they spare nothing to save me from those rages which kill me by inches. I can rely on no one!"

"General, I cannot allow you to say so without remark," said Dagobert, in a calm but firm and penetrating voice.

"What mean you?"

"General, I cannot allow you to say that you can rely on no one; you will, perhaps, end by believing so, and that would be still harder for you than for those who know what their devotion is, and would throw themselves into the flames for you; and I — am one of these — I! and you well know it!"

These simple words, spoken by Dagobert with a tone of profound emotion, recalled the maréchal to himself; for his loyal and generous disposition might be from time to time excited by irritation or chagrin, but it soon resumed its original uprightness and justice, and replying to Dagobert, he said, in a tone less harsh, but which was still much agitated:

"You are right, I ought not to doubt you — my irritation masters me! This infamous letter has quite unhinged me — made me mad. I am unjust — brutal — ungrateful! Yes, ungrateful — and to whom? To you — yes —"

"Do not say another word about me, general; with such kind words at the end of the year, you may treat me like a brute for the other three hundred and sixty-four days. But what has occurred?"

The maréchal's countenance again became overcast, and he said in a brief, quick tone:

"What is it has occurred? — that I am despised — disdained!"

"You — you?"

"Yes; me — me! And, after all," added the maré-

chal, bitterly, "why should I conceal this fresh wound from you? I have doubted you, and I owe you this recompense. You shall then know all. For some time past I have remarked that when I met my old companions in arms they gradually withdrew from me."

"What, was it this that the anonymous letter —"

"Alluded to? — yes. And it said the truth," continued the maréchal, with a sigh of anger and indignation.

"But it is impossible, general. You, so loved — so respected!"

"These are but words; I speak to you of facts. When I appear the conversation commenced suddenly ceases; instead of treating me like a brother soldier, they affect towards me a stiff and chill politeness. There are a thousand shades, a thousand nothings, which wound the heart, and yet can hardly be described."

"What you tell me, general, astounds me," replied Dagobert, in amaze; "yet, as you tell me so, I must believe you."

"It had become intolerable. I wished to have it cleared up; and this morning I went to General d'Havrincourt, who was colonel with me in the Imperial Guard, and is the soul of honour and frankness. I went to him to open my heart. 'I have perceived,' I said to him, 'the coldness evinced towards me; there must be some calumny in circulation against me. Tell me all. Knowing the attacks, I will defend myself boldly — honourably.'"

"Well, general?"

"D'Havrincourt was stiff and ceremonious, making cold replies to my questions, such as 'I do not know, monsieur le maréchal, that any calumnious report has been spread about you.' 'I do not require to be called "monsieur le maréchal," my dear D'Havrincourt. We are old soldiers — old friends! My honour is uneasy, I confess; for I find that you and our comrades do not receive me so cordially as you did in former days. It

cannot be denied; I see it — I know it — I feel it.' At this D'Havrincourt replied, with the same coldness, 'I have never remarked any failure in attentions to you.' 'I am not talking of attentions,' I exclaimed, pressing his hand cordially, whilst he very faintly returned my grasp, as I remarked, 'I speak to you of affection, of confidence evinced towards me, whilst now I am treated more and more like a stranger. Why is this? Wherefore this estrangement?' Still chilling and reserved, he answered, 'These are but such delicate shades, monsieur le maréchal, that it is impossible for me to give you an opinion on this point.' My heart was filled with anger and grief. What was to be done? To provoke D'Havrincourt was folly, and from self-respect I broke off a conversation which but too well confirmed my fears. Thus," added the maréchal, more and more excited, "thus I have no doubt fallen from the esteem to which I am entitled — perhaps despised; and yet ignorant of the cause! Is not this hateful? If, indeed, there was any fact, any report, I might at least be able to defend myself — avenge myself — or refute it. But nothing — nothing — not a word; a coldness as polite as it was cutting and insulting. Oh, again I say it is too much — too much! And all this is added to other cares. What a life has mine been since my father's death! Can I even find some rest, some happiness, in my own home? No; I return to it, and it is to peruse infamous letters. And besides this," added the maréchal, in a tone of deep affliction, after a moment's hesitation, — and besides this, I find my children more and more indifferent towards me. Yes," added the maréchal, as he observed Dagobert's amazement; "and yet they do not know how dear they are to me!"

"Your daughters indifferent?" replied Dagobert, surprised. "Do you say that?"

"And, indeed, I do not blame them; they have scarcely had time to know me."

"Not had time to know you!" responded the soldier, in a reproachful tone, and becoming excited in his turn. "And of whom did their mother talk to them but of you? And did not I constantly make you the third amongst us? And what have we taught your children if it were not to know, to love you?"

"You defend them; that is just! They love you better than me," said the maréchal, with increasing bitterness.

Dagobert was deeply moved, and gazed at the maréchal without reply.

"Yes," said the maréchal, with a painful burst, "yes, it is cowardly, ungrateful. But no matter. Twenty times I have been jealous — yes, cruelly jealous — of the affectionate confidence which my children testify to you, whilst when with me they seem always fearful. If their melancholy features are sometimes animated by a gayer look than usual, it is when conversing with you or when they see you; whilst to me they show but constraint, coldness, and it kills me. Sure of the affection of my children, I could have braved everything, overcome everything." Then seeing Dagobert about to rush towards the door which communicated with the apartment of Rose and Blanche, the maréchal said to him, "Where are you going?"

"To fetch your daughters, general."

"What to do?"

"To bring them before you; to say to them, 'My children, your father believes you do not love him.' I will only say that, and you will see —"

"Dagobert, I forbid you!" exclaimed the father of Rose and Blanche, impetuously.

"It is not a question of Dagobert; you have no right to be unjust towards the poor dear children." And again the soldier moved towards the door.

"Dagobert, I command you to remain here!" exclaimed the maréchal.

"Hear me, general. I am your soldier, your inferior, your servant, if you will," said the ex-dragoon, roughly; "but there is no rank, no grade to be considered, when it is a question of defending your daughters. All will be explained; to place good people in one another's presence — that is the only way I know."

And if the maréchal had not retained him by the arm, Dagobert would have gone into the orphans' apartment.

"Stay!" said the maréchal, so imperiously that the soldier, accustomed to obedience, bowed his head and did not move.

"What are you about to do?" inquired the maréchal; "to tell my daughters that they do not love me? Thus to excite an affectation of tenderness which the poor girls do not actually experience? It is not their fault; no doubt it is mine!"

"Ah, general," said Dagobert, with a tone of deep affliction, "it is no longer anger that I feel whilst I hear you speak thus of your children, but grief. You break my heart."

The maréchal, touched by the expression of the soldier's physiognomy, replied less harshly, "Well, then I am wrong again; and yet, I ask you without bitterness, without jealousy, are not my daughters more confiding, more familiar with you than with me?"

"*Morbleu!* my general," cried Dagobert, "if you take that view, why, they are more familiar with Killjoy than with me. You are their father, and however good a father may be, he inspires a certain awe. They are familiar with me, *pardieu!* Why, how could they be otherwise? How the devil should they have any respect for me who, except my moustaches and my six-foot stature, am just like some old granny who nursed them? Then I must tell you, too, even before the death of your good father you were melancholy — preoccupied — and the children remarked it; and what you take for cold-

ness on their part is, I am sure, only uneasiness on your account. Really, general, you are not just; you complain because, in fact, they love you too much."

"I complain of what I suffer," said the maréchal, with painful excitement; "I alone know my own sufferings."

"They must, indeed, be great," continued Dagobert, with increasing emotion. "But why should I seek to defend the unfortunate children, who only know how to be resigned and love you? What is the use of defending them against your unhappy blindness?"

The maréchal made a gesture of impatience and anger, and replied, with assumed coolness, "I shall always remember all I owe you. I never can forget it, whatever you may do."

"But, general," cried Dagobert, "why will you not allow me to fetch your children?"

"Do you not see that such a scene would crush, destroy me?" exclaimed the maréchal, exasperated. "Do you not see that I have no desire to make my daughters witnesses of what I endure? A father's grief has dignity, sir, and you ought to perceive and respect it."

"Respect it? No! For it is an injustice that causes it."

"Enough, sir, enough."

"And not content with thus tormenting yourself," cried Dagobert, unable any longer to contain himself, "do you know what you will do? You will drive your daughters to die of grief, I tell you; and it was not for that that I brought them to you from the depths of Siberia."

"Reproaches?"

"Yes; for to make your daughters unhappy is the real way to evince ingratitude to me."

"Leave the room this instant, sir!" cried the maréchal, greatly excited, and so fearful from his anger and grief, that Dagobert, regretting to have urged him so far, replied:

"General, I was wrong; I have, perhaps, been wanting in respect. Excuse me, but — "

"I excuse you, but desire you will leave me alone," replied the maréchal, containing himself with difficulty.

"One word, general!"

"I request you as a favour to leave me alone; I require it as a service at your hands. Will that suffice?" said the maréchal, redoubling his efforts to contain himself. And a ghastly paleness succeeded the deep red which, during this painful scene, had inflamed the maréchal's features. Dagobert, alarmed at this symptom, renewed his entreaties.

"I entreat you, general," he said, in an agitated voice, "allow me for a moment to — "

"Since you will have it so, I will quit the room, sir," said the maréchal, advancing towards the door.

These words were uttered in such an accent that Dagobert dared persist no longer, but bowed his head in grief and despair, looked again for a moment at the maréchal in silence, and with a supplicating air; but at another impatient gesture which the father of Rose and Blanche could hardly repress, the soldier slowly left the apartment.

But a few minutes had elapsed since Dagobert's departure, when the maréchal, who, after a deep and gloomy silence, had several times approached the door of his daughters' apartment with hesitation filled with anguish, made a violent effort with himself, wiped the perspiration which streamed upon his brow, endeavoured to conceal his agitation, and entered the room to which Rose and Blanche had retreated.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE TEST.

Dagobert was perfectly right to defend his children, as he paternally styled Rose and Blanche, and yet the coldness and indifference with which the maréchal reproached his daughters were unfortunately but too much borne out by appearances. As he had told his father, being utterly unable to explain the cause of the timid embarrassment, the shrinking dread, his children seemed to experience in his presence, he at last ascribed it to the coldness of their feelings towards himself. At times he bitterly reproached himself with not having been able to conceal from them the severe grief their mother's death had occasioned him, allowing them to infer thereby that they were insufficient to console him; and, again, the fear would come across him of not having manifested an affection sufficiently warm and tender to replace the parent they had lost. At other times he dreaded lest his soldierlike roughness had alarmed and discouraged them. And then he would persuade himself, with a bitter pang, that having always lived away from him, they looked upon their father almost as a stranger. In a word, the most improbable and unfounded suspicions presented themselves to his mind in endless variety, and, so soon as the seeds of doubt, distrust, or fear have insinuated themselves into an affection, the fatal fruits will not be long in manifesting themselves. And yet, spite of the coldness which so deeply pained him, so intense was the maréchal's affection for his daughters,

that the idea of again quitting them caused him the bitterest agony, and occasioned a continual struggle between his feelings as a father and what he looked upon as a sacred and imperative duty.

As for the various slanderous reports, so skilfully circulated respecting the maréchal that many even of his most honourable-minded friends and old military companions gave some credit to them, they were industriously propagated by the allies of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier with most fatal and fiendish success. The aim and import of these vile rumours will be seen hereafter; but their present effect on the sensitive mind of the maréchal, already writhing under so many deep sources of grief, was to drive him almost to a state of madness.

Carried away by passion, and driven almost to desperation by the continual goadings and torture he experienced at the hands of his unseen enemies, and still further irritated by Dagobert's words, he had driven him from his presence. But, after the old man had quitted him, the maréchal, left to solitude and reflection, could not avoid recalling the warmth and self-conviction with which the soldier had vindicated his daughters, and a doubt stole over his mind as to the reality of the frigidity and indifference of which he had accused them. He determined, therefore, to test the matter at once; and, having taken a fearful resolution in the event of his distracting doubts being confirmed, entered, as before stated, into his daughters' apartment.

So loud and angry had been the discussion with Dagobert, that the sound of their voices had reached the ears of the sisters, who had quitted their sitting-room to avoid overhearing the conversation of their father, and sought refuge in their bedchamber — their pale and anxious countenances evincing the terror they experienced. At the sight of the maréchal, whose features also bore the marks of extreme agitation, the sisters rose from their

seat, and, respectfully welcoming their parent, remained clinging to each other in trembling suspense.

And yet neither anger nor severity were indicated by the expression of the maréchal's features. On the contrary, they were marked by a deep and almost supplicating sorrow, a look that seemed to implore their sympathising affection. It was as if he had said:

"My children, I am wretched, and I come to you for comfort. I cannot live without the solace of your love and tenderness."

And so clearly were these words impressed on the speaking countenance of the maréchal, that, after the orphans had conquered their first fear, they were about to throw themselves into his arms; but recalling the conduct recommended in the anonymous letter, in which they were assured that every display of affection on their part added to their father's sufferings, they exchanged a mournful glance with each other and restrained themselves from an act calculated to cause additional pain to their beloved parent.

And by a cruel coincidence the maréchal also pined to clasp his children to his heart, — that noble heart smarting under so many stings their innocent love alone could cure. His eye rested on them with doting fondness, and he was even about to call them to him, not daring to enfold them in his arms for fear of exciting that timidity and embarrassment with which they seemed so oppressed when in his presence; but the hapless girls, terrified by the fiendlike advice they had received, made no responsive movement, but continued to stand silent and trembling before him.

A bitter pang shot through the heart of the maréchal at this apparent insensibility; all doubt was at an end, and it was but too manifest that his daughters could neither comprehend his terrible grief nor his despairing tenderness.

"Still, still cold and immovable," said he, mentally. "Alas, then, I was not mistaken!"

But anxious to conceal the misery he endured, he advanced towards his daughters, and, in a voice he struggled hard to render calm and composed, said:

"Good day, my children."

"The same to you, papa," replied Rose, less timid than her sister.

"I was unable to see you all yesterday," continued the maréchal, in an unsteady voice. "I was so deeply engaged, and with affairs of such deep importance, that I had no means of escaping from them, — matters relative to my military duties; but you are not angry with me for having thus neglected you, I hope?" said the maréchal, trying to smile, not venturing to tell them that, after the violence and excitement of the preceding night, he had sought to tranquillise his jarred and harassed feelings by gazing on them as they slept. "Tell me," repeated he, "will you not forgive me for this seeming neglect on my part?"

"Certainly, dear papa," said Blanche, timidly, and casting down her eyes as she spoke."

"And if," said the maréchal, speaking slowly and distinctly, "I were obliged to leave you for a time, you would also excuse me, and try to reconcile yourselves to my absence, would you not?"

"We should be very sorry, indeed, if you put yourself to the smallest inconvenience on our account," replied Rose, as she remembered that the anonymous letters continually referred to the sacrifices their presence compelled their father to make.

At this reply, uttered with as much embarrassment as timidity, but which the maréchal construed into genuine and unaffected indifference, the unhappy father ceased to hope for comfort from the affection of his children, who evidently felt nothing for him beyond cold respect and frigid duty.

"It is finished!" thought the miserable parent, as he contemplated his children; "they have no feeling of affection in common with myself. Whether I go or stay, it matters not to them. No, no, they love me not; since, even in this awful moment in which, perhaps, I behold them for the last time, no warning instinct whispers to them that their tenderness would save me."

While these painful reflections passed through the mind of the maréchal, he still kept tenderly gazing on his daughters, and his manly features assumed an expression at once so touching and yet distracting, his eyes revealed so plainly and mournfully the anguish and despair that lay heavy at his heart, that Rose and Blanche, thoroughly overcome, terrified by the mute appeal of their father, forgot all their caution and pre-determination, and, yielding to an irresistible impulse of spontaneous tenderness, threw their arms around their father's neck, and covered him with tears and kisses.

Neither Maréchal Simon nor his daughters had uttered a word, yet all three understood each other. Their hearts, as though touched by an electric shock, had mingled, as it were, into one.

Vain fears, false doubts, deceitful counsels, all had given way before the burst of genuine affection which threw the daughters into their father's arms, and infused faith and confidence into their hearts at the very moment when a fatal mistrust was about to separate them for ever.

All these thoughts passed rapidly through the mind of the maréchal, but he found no words to give them utterance. Breathless with wonder and delight, the overjoyed father smothered the face, hands, and hair of his beloved children with his kisses by turns, weeping over them, smiling, sighing, and betraying an ecstacy of happiness that bordered on delirium. At length he exclaimed:

"I have found them again — but, no, no, I have never

lost them! They have always loved me, I feel assured of it, but durst not tell me so. I have been too grave — too severe for their timid natures. I have repressed the utterance of their tenderness by my gloom and reserve. And to think, too, that I should imagine — but it is all my fault. Merciful God, I thank thee for this blessing, which seems to bring with it increase of strength, courage, resolution, and hope. Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed he, laughing and weeping at the same time, as he again and again pressed his children to his heart; "let them come now and mock me, despise, and harass me. I defy them all, ay, and the whole world, too, to render me again unhappy. Look at me, my beloved ones, and let the sight of those dear eyes speak peace and happiness to my soul."

"Dear, dear father," cried Rose, with enchanting innocence, "then you do love us as much as we love you?"

"And now you will always allow us to throw our arms about your neck, embrace you, and tell you how delighted we are to be with you?"

"And to display to our dearest father all the tenderness we have been hoarding up in our hearts, when our only grief, alas! consisted in being unable to exhibit it."

"And you will give us your permission to speak all our thoughts aloud?"

"Yes, yes," beloved children," answered Maréchal Simon, almost beside himself with joy, "who or what shall prevent you from pouring out all the treasures of your young hearts to a parent who can never sufficiently testify his love for you? Who has hitherto denied us all that delight? But no, no; do not reply; I know, I understand quite well how all has happened. Enough, however, of the past; I see plainly enough that my absent and preoccupied manner has been too much for your young ideas to comprehend, and, naturally enough, you have explained it after your own belief of its cause,

and it has grieved you and rendered you sad; while, on my side, I have been equally pained at your dejection, which I mistook for — But, upon my word, I seem unconscious of what I am saying, and to have no other thought but of looking at you till my brain grows dizzy with excess of joy."

"Dear, kind papa," cried the delighted girls, "look well into our eyes, that you may read there all the love with which our hearts are filled for you."

"And besides that, dearest papa," added Blanche, sweetly, "you will see written there happiness unfailing for ourselves, and love unchangeable for you. Give me your hand," continued she, taking the hand of her father, and pressing it to her heart.

"And me, too, dear father," cried Rose, taking the maréchal's other hand.

"Now, then," said both sisters, "do you believe in the love and happiness we told you of?"

It is impossible to describe the look of almost heavenly brightness and filial pride with which the sweet girls regarded their parent, as he placed his brave hands, according to their directions, and felt the eager throb of their youthful hearts, beating high with joy and hope.

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed the maréchal; "happiness and tenderness are alone capable of causing pulsations such as these."

A sort of heavy, hoarse sigh proceeding from the chamber door, which had been left open, made the happy girls raise their heads from their father's shoulder, while all three directed their looks to the spot from whence the sound arose; there they perceived the tall figure of Dagobert, by whose side stood Killjoy, rubbing his black nose against the knees of the old soldier.

Wiping his eyes with his blue checked handkerchief, the old man stood stiff and motionless as if on parade. Then struggling between the emotion he tried to subdue and the choking in his throat caused by the tears he

obliged himself to swallow, significantly shaking his head he managed to say to the maréchal in a harsh, guttural, sobbing kind of voice:

"Well, I said so! I told you so — didn't I?"

"Hush!" replied the maréchal, with an expressive smile. "You were a better father than myself, my worthy friend, — but come and embrace my dear girls. I am no longer jealous of their affection!"

So saying, the maréchal held out his hand to the soldier, who warmly and energetically pressed it, while the sisters threw their arms around his neck, and Killjoy, wishing, according to custom, to have his share in the happiness going forward, reared himself on his hind legs, and familiarly placed his fore paws on the shoulders of his master.

For a moment the silence was unbroken by a sound; but the exquisite felicity enjoyed by the maréchal, his daughters, and their faithful Dagobert was suddenly interrupted by a loud barking from Killjoy, who had quitted his two-legged position.

The happy group parted, looked around them, and beheld the stupid countenance of Jocrisse, looking more vacant and silly than usual; the idiotic fellow remained standing staring in the open doorway, carrying his eternal wood-basket in one hand, and a large *plumeau*, or feather brush, in the other.

Nothing is more exhilarating than happiness. Thus, though his appearance just then was anything but opportune or agreeable, the sight of this grotesque figure, with the fixed stolidity of his gaze, drew a peal of gay, joyous laughter from the bright rosy lips of the sisters.

The very circumstance of Jocrisse having brought back to the so long dejected girls those mirthful smiles and vivacious spirits which had once been so natural to them, was quite sufficient to claim for him the indulgence of the maréchal, who accordingly said, in a kind, encouraging manner:

"What do you want, my good fellow?"

"M. le Duc," replied Jocrisse, with an awkward bow, and dropping his *plumeau*, in a forcible attempt to cover his breast with his hand, "I hope you do not think it is me."

The laughter of the light-hearted girls broke out again with redoubled vehemence.

"Who the deuce is it, then, if not you?" inquired the maréchal.

"Come here, Killjoy!" cried Dagobert, for the sagacious brute seemed to entertain a secret presentiment concerning the supposed simpleton, not exactly to his advantage, and was drawing close to him with a more than suspicious air.

"No, M. le Duc," replied Jocrisse, "it is not me — I mean my fault — I took the liberty to come; but because the *valet de chambre* told me to tell M. Dagobert, when I come up with wood, to tell you, M. le Duc — as I was bringing up a basketful — that M. Robert wanted — to — speak — to you."

At this ridiculous piece of oratory on the part of Jocrisse, and the sight of his great staring, rolling eyes and bewildered-looking countenance, the two girls again indulged their mirthful propensities, and fresh bursts of laughter welcomed its delivery. But the maréchal joined not in their hilarity; on the contrary, he started with a painful recollection as the name of M. Robert met his ear.

This individual was the secret emissary of Rodin, as regarded the possible, though somewhat adventurous scheme in agitation for endeavouring to carry off the young prince, Napoleon II.

After a brief pause, the maréchal, whose countenance was still radiant with joy and happiness, said to Jocrisse:

"Beg of M. Robert to wait a moment below, — in my study."

"Yes, M. le Duc!" replied Jocrisse, bowing till his head touched the ground. "I will, M. le Duc!"

As soon as the idiot had quitted the chamber, the maréchal said to his daughters, in a joyful tone:

"This is not a day or a moment to leave you, my sweet children — even for M. Robert."

"Oh, so much the better, dear papa," cried Blanche, gaily, "for, to tell you the truth, that M. Robert is no favourite of mine as it is."

"Have you writing materials at hand!" inquired the maréchal.

"Oh, yes, dear papa," answered Rose, quickly, pointing to a small writing-table placed beside one of the windows, to which the maréchal hastily walked; "you will find everything there, arranged all ready, as though prepared purposely for you."

And then the two sisters, who had considerately forborne to interrupt or follow their father, but remained standing by the fireside, tenderly and lovingly embraced each other, rejoicing, with all the delight of their young and innocent hearts, in this day's unexpected happiness.

The maréchal, meanwhile, seated himself before the writing-table of his daughters, and beckoned to Dagobert to approach him.

While rapidly tracing, with a firm hand, some few words on the paper, he said smilingly to Dagobert, but in so low a tone that his daughters were unable to hear him:

"Do you know what I had almost resolved on before entering here a little while ago?"

"No, general; tell me yourself."

"To blow out my brains; and it is to my children I owe the relinquishing my fatal intention."

The maréchal then resumed his writing.

Dagobert could not refrain from a sudden start, as this fearful confirmation of his worst fears reached him

from the maréchal's own lips. But that passed away, and he replied:

"You could not have done so with your own pistols at any rate, general. I had guarded against that by taking off the caps."

The maréchal turned quickly towards him, and looked at the old soldier with an air of surprise. The latter, however, bore the scrutiny unmoved, but, merely giving a confirmatory nod of the head, said:

"Never mind, that's all done with. Thank God those dreadful thoughts are for ever ended!"

The maréchal's only answer was to point to his children with a look of ineffable tenderness and joyful exultation; then sealing the brief note he had just written, he gave it to the soldier, saying:

"Carry that to M. Robert, and say I will see him to-morrow."

Dagobert took the letter and departed.

Then the maréchal, returning to his daughters, and extending his arms, said, gaily:

"Come, young ladies, I claim one of your best kisses for having sacrificed that poor M. Robert to you. Now, then, I am waiting to be paid!"

Rose and Blanche threw themselves on their father's neck.

At almost the same instant that these things were passing at Paris, two strange travellers, though separated from each other, exchanged through space and distance their mysterious thoughts.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF ST. JOHN THE DECAPITATED.

THE sun is declining.

At the extremity of an immense forest of pines, in the depths of a gloomy solitude, are the ruins of an abbey formerly dedicated to St. John the Decapitated.

Ivy, parasitical plants, and moss cover almost entirely the stones blackened with age; several ruined arches, some walls pierced with Gothic windows, remain standing, and are defined against the dark curtain of the dense woods.

Elevated above this mass of ruins, and on a mutilated pedestal half hidden by creeping plants, a colossal stone statue, dilapidated here and there, remained standing.

The statue is remarkable — awe-inspiring.

It represents a man beheaded. Clothed in an antique toga, it holds a dish in its hands. In this dish is a head; this head is his own.

It is the statue of St. John the Martyr put to death by order of Herodias.

There is a solemn silence. From time to time is heard but the dull rustling of the branches of the enormous pine-trees shaken by the breeze.

Copper-coloured clouds, reddened by the setting sun, sail slowly above the high forest, and are reflected in the current of a small stream of sparkling water, which, crossing the ruins of the abbey, derives its source from the midst of a mass of rocks at a distance.

The water flows, the clouds pass on, the aged trees shake, the wind sighs.

Suddenly across the shadow formed by the high tops of this enclosure, whose innumerable trunks are lost in the vast depths, there appears a human form.

It is a female.

She advances slowly towards the ruins — reaches them; she tramples on what was once holy ground.

She is pale, her look is sad, her long gown floats in the wind, her feet are covered with dust; her step is painful, faltering.

A block of stone is placed on the border of the stream, nearly underneath the statue of St. John the Decapitated.

On this stone this woman sinks exhausted, breathless with fatigue.

Yet for many days, many years, many ages, she walks onwards — onwards — unceasingly.

But, for the first time, she feels an insuperable lassitude.

For the first time her feet are wearied.

For the first time she who crossed with equal careless and certain step the moving lava of the torrid deserts, whilst whole caravans were swallowed up beneath the waves of burning sand, —

She who with firm and heedless foot trampled on the eternal snows of the northern regions, icy solitudes in which no human being could exist, —

She who was spared by the devouring flames of fire and the impetuous waters of the torrent, —

She, in fine, who for so many centuries had nothing in common with humanity, she now, for the first time, experienced mortal agony.

Her feet were bleeding, her limbs bruised with fatigue, — a devouring thirst consumes her.

She feels these infirmities, suffers under them, and yet dares scarcely believe it.

Her joy would be too overpowering.

But her throat, more and more parched, is contracted; it is on fire. She sees the spring, and goes hastily on her knees to quench her thirst at this crystalline current, clear and bright as a mirror.

What then passes?

Scarcely have her parching lips touched the pure and fresh water, than, still on her knees on the bank of this stream, and leaning on her two hands, this woman suddenly ceases to drink, and looks intently in the limpid brook.

Suddenly forgetting the thirst which still devours her, she utters a loud cry, — a cry of deep, vast, religious joy as a token of thanksgiving towards the Lord.

In this deep mirror she sees that she has grown older.

In some days, in some hours, in some minutes — at this very moment, perchance — she has attained the maturity of her age.

She who for more than eighteen centuries was only twenty years of age, and dragged through worlds and generations this imperishable youth, —

She had grown old. She might then hope for death.

Each minute of her existence she approached the tomb.

Transported at this ineffable hope, she rises suddenly, raises her head to heaven, and clasps her hands in an attitude of fervent prayer.

Then her eyes rest on the large stone statue representing St. John the Decapitated.

The head, which the martyr bears in his hands, seems through its granite eyelid, half closed by death, to cast on the Wandering Jewess a look of commiseration and pity.

And it is she — Herodias — who, in the cruel excitement of a heathen festival, demanded the death of this saint!

And it is at the foot of the image of the martyr that,

for the first time for long ages, the immortality which weighed Herodias down seems to be alleviated.

"Ah, impenetrable mystery, ah, divine hope!" she exclaims, "the heavenly wrath is at length appeased! The hand of the Lord leads me to the feet of this holy martyr; it is at his feet that I begin to be a human creature. It is to avenge his death that the Lord had condemned me to an eternal journeying.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* grant that not only I may be pardoned! He, the artisan, who, like me, the king's daughter, journeys onwards for ages, — may he, like me, hope to attain the limit of his eternal course!

"Where is he, Lord, where is he? The power you gave me to see him through space, — have you withdrawn it? Oh, at this moment restore to me, O Lord, this divine gift; for, in proportion as I feel these human infirmities, which I bless as the end of my eternity of ills, my sight loses the power of penetrating the immensity, my ear the power of hearing the wandering man from one end of the world to the other."

Night had come — dark, stormy.

The wind had risen amidst the gloomy pine forest.

Behind their black summits the silver disc of the moon began to rise slowly through the dark clouds.

Perhaps the invocation of the Wandering Jewess was heard.

Suddenly her eyes closed, her hands clasped together, and she remained kneeling in the midst of ruins, motionless as a statue amongst tombs.

And then she had a strange vision!

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE CALVARY.

THIS is the vision of Herodias.

On the summit of a high mountain, bare, rugged, and precipitous, is a Calvary.

The sun is declining as it was declining when the Jewess had dragged herself, exhausted with fatigue, to the ruins of St. John the Decapitated.

The Lord crucified on the cross; the hill and plain, arid, boundless; the figure of Christ on the cross seems white and pale against the blue-black clouds which obscure the face of heaven, and become of a deep violet hue as they lower in the horizon.

In the horizon — where the setting sun has left long trains of lurid light — red as blood.

As far as the eye can reach, no vegetation appears on this gloomy desert, covered with sand and flint, like the time-exhausted bed of some dried-up ocean.

The silence of death reigns over this desolate country.

Sometimes gigantic black vultures, with their bare and fleshy necks, their yellow and bright eyes, pausing in their flight in the midst of these solitudes, come hither to feed on the bleeding prey which they have carried off from a country less savage.

How comes it that this Calvary, this place of prayers, has been constructed so far from the abode of men?

This Calvary was raised at great cost by a repentant sinner. He had done great injury to his fellow men, and, to deserve pardon for his crimes, he climbed up this

mountain on his knees, and became an anchorite; he lived until his death at the foot of this cross, scarcely sheltered by a thatched roof open to the wind on all sides.

The sun is still sinking; the sky becomes more and more sombre; the luminous rays of the horizon, formerly purple, gradually become obscured, like bars of iron, — of iron heated in the fire, the heat of which gradually expires.

Suddenly, there is heard behind one of the extremities of the Calvary opposite to the west the noise of several stones which are detached, and fall rolling to the base of the mountain.

The step of a traveller, who, after having traversed the plain, has been for a weary hour climbing this steep ascent, has caused the stones to roll away.

This traveller does not yet appear, but his slow, equal, and firm tread is heard; at length he attains the summit of the mountain, and his tall form is visible against the stormy sky.

This traveller is as pale as the Christ on the cross; on his broad forehead, from one temple to the other, a black line extends itself.

It is the artisan of Jerusalem!

The artisan rendered unfeeling by misery, injustice, and oppression; he who, without pity for the sufferings of the Divine Man bearing his cross, had repulsed him from his dwelling, exclaiming fiercely:

"Onwards — onwards — onwards!"

And since that day an avenging God has said in his turn to the artisan of Jerusalem:

"Onwards — onwards — onwards!"

And he has gone onwards — eternally onwards!

Not confining his vengeance to this, the Lord has been pleased sometimes to affix death to the steps of the wandering man, and countless graves have been the mile-stones of his homicidal progress across worlds.

And to the wandering man they were days of rest to his infinite pain when the invisible hand of the Lord thrust him into deep solitudes, such as the desert in which he now dragged his footsteps, for as he crossed this desolate plain he did not again hear the funereal knell of the dead, which for ever — for ever sounded behind him in populated lands.

All day, and every day, and at this instant plunged in the dark abyss of his thoughts, following his fatal route, going whithersoever the invisible hand urged him, his head stooping on his breast, his eyes fastened on the ground, the wandering man had traversed the plain, ascended the mountain without looking towards heaven, without looking at the Calvary — without seeing Christ on the cross.

The wandering man was thinking of the last descendants of his race; he felt, in the desolation of his heart, that great perils still menaced them.

And in bitter despair, profound as the ocean, the artisan of Jerusalem sat down at the foot of the Calvary. At this moment, a last ray of the sun, piercing in the horizon the gloomy pile of clouds, threw on the crest of the mountains, on the Calvary, a burning light, like the reflection of a conflagration.

The Jew placed his hand upon his reclining brow; his long hair, agitated by the evening breeze, covered his pale face, when, throwing aside his hair from his face, he started with surprise, — he who was no longer astonished at anything.

With an anxious look he gazed on the long tress of hair which he held in his hand. His locks, lately as black as midnight, had become gray.

He, too, like Herodias, had become older. The progress of his years, arrested for eighteen centuries, had again moved forwards. He, too, as well as the Wandering Jewess, might now hope for the grave.

Throwing himself on his knees, he extended his hands,

his face to heaven, to ask of God an explanation of the mystery which filled him with such joyful hope.

Then, for the first time, his eyes rested on the Christ on the cross, which was on the Calvary, just as the Wandering Jewess had fixed her gaze on the granite eyelid of the holy martyr.

The Christ, with the head bowed beneath the weight of his crown of thorns, seemed from the height of his cross to contemplate with mercy and forgiveness the artisan whom he had cursed so many ages ago, and who, on his knees, leaning back in an attitude of fear and prayer, extended towards him his suppliant hands.

"O Christ," exclaimed the Jew, "the avenging arm of the Lord leads me to this foot of the cross so burdensome, which thou, broken down with sufferings, bearedst! O Christ, when thou wouldest stop to repose at the threshold of my poor abode, and in my pitiless brutality I repulsed thee, saying, Onwards! Onwards! and now, after my wandering life I find myself before this cross; and now, at length, my hair becomes gray. O Christ, in thy divine goodness hast thou pardoned me? Have I, then, attained the end of my eternal course? Doth thy celestial clemency at length grant me that rest of the grave which hitherto, alas! has continually fled from me? Oh, if thy clemency descends on me, may it also descend on the woman, whose punishment is equal to my own! Protect, also, the last descendants of my race! What will be their destiny? Lord, already, one of them, the only one of all whom misfortune has corrupted, has disappeared from this earth. Is it for this that my hair has grown gray? Will my crime never be expiated until not one of the descendants of our doomed family survives? Or does this proof of thy all-powerful goodness, O Lord, which restores me to humanity, announce thy clemency, and the happiness of my descendants? Will they at length come out triumphantly from the perils which threaten them? Will

they be enabled to accomplish all the good with which their ancestor desired to benefit humanity — to merit their pardon and my own? Or, indeed, inexorably condemned by thee, O Lord, as the accursed scions of my accursed race, must they expiate their original offence and my crime?

"Oh, say, — say, O Lord, shall I be pardoned with them, or shall they be punished with me?"

In vain had the twilight given place to the dark and stormy night; the Jew still prayed, fervently kneeling at the foot of the Calvary.

## CHAPTER XV.

### RÉSUMÉ.

ROMANCE is usually inspired by the observation of manners which it reproduces, in the infinite variety of their most prominent aspects, their most delicate shades. It is also inspired by the study of mankind, and has unveiled to us very frequently the most hidden springs of its multiplied and impassioned nature. But M. Eugène Sue has opened for it fresh horizons. Since the appearance of the "Mysteries of Paris," romance is replete with the spectacle of the general phenomena of social life; romance seeks to study its laws and notes down its disorders and fearful iniquities.

We do not know in France any who have preceded M. Eugène Sue in the wide and progressive path in which he advances. Before him, no doubt, writers of every degree, struck with the varieties, the follies, and the vices of the society of their age, allowed themselves to laugh at them in their works which we will call romances, if you please, for want of a more exact name; thus did Rabelais in "Gargantua," Montesquieu in the "Lettres Persannes," and many others besides, whom we could quote. But whatever was the genius of the majority of these writers, this was the comedy of manners generalised, and not social criticism properly so called. It is true that M. Sue has been reproached with having taken up utopianisms as his starting-points, and urged their application as urgent reforms incumbent on society. The best reply to such a reproach is to appeal to history.

Thomas Morus, Harrington, Campanella, have written, under the form of philosophy, social romances, which are called "Utopia," "Oceana," "The City of the Sun," and many of the schemes of their books are found, without any one being surprised, rightly and fitly realised in our day.

The "Mysteries of Paris" and the "Wandering Jew" are animated by a spirit of social philosophy which, to be properly understood, requires a more serious attention than that which is usually accorded to literary fancies.

Awaiting the time when the second of these two works shall be complete, we purpose now to sum up the plot and the principal incidents of this great fable of the "Wandering Jew," that there may be fewer gaps in the reader's memory in perusing the concluding chapters of this admirable study.

It must not be supposed that M. Eugène Sue has had in view in this work a simple campaign against the Jesuits. If he has pursued with the energy of unwearied criticism a corporation of which the past ought to put us all completely on our guard as to the future; if he has thrown the strong light of publicity into the most mysterious secrecies of the Jesuitical Dædalus, be assured that it was not for the simple and sole sake of aiding in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits have been for him a means and not an end; he has seized on them because they were at hand, as instances of the prodigies which a concentration of individual forces can effect in one determined and unvarying line of action.

The real problem he has desired to state, a very ancient problem, but one that has not grown old, is that of a human fraternity becoming more informed by the lights of science. Then, to prove to us that he did not aspire to a chimera, to an ideal of impossible and fanciful organisation, he has brought out to the light of day the marvellous workings of the Jesuitical mechanism, in

order that we might anticipate all that the spirit of good could extract from the intelligent combination of human strength, since the Company of Jesus, in which one poet personifies the Spirit of Evil, has been able to acquire such enormous power by the single fact of its energy and, let us add, its powerful tendency to unity.

"The Wandering Jew," with its multiplicity of episodes, incidents, interests, and facts, is a little world that reflects the great one. As to the personages who people it, they are types, and types painted by a master hand. Each of them corresponds to some one of the aspects of human nature, to one of the characteristic traits of the physiognomy of man.

Let us recall to mind the elements of this drama. They are simple, as suits a work of such extent. It is a sustained struggle. On the one side, the Society of Jesus, that society powerful even from its endurance and the pertinacity of its system, from the self-denial of its associates in the accomplishment of their common work, and from the contempt which it is enabled to create, when requisite, of all principles which may cross its progress. On the other hand is a family, many of the members of which remain strangers to each other, who defend themselves almost always singly, and who, far from concentrating all their strength and all their thoughts in the object of their pursuit, are distracted, weakened, separated by the passions incidental to those who live in the world. They have for an auxiliary, it is true, a kind of providential chance; a fantastic, superhuman being appears in the principal portion of the drama and interferes in their favour. But the Wandering Jew, their ancestor, in spite of his singular nature, can lend them but very feeble succour. He only passes, borne in a whirlwind, in a track marked out by the hand of Heaven. He is frequently far from the oppressed family at the moment when it has the greatest need of his aid.

The aim of this unequal struggle, in which one of the parties only defends itself, is the acquisition of an immense inheritance left to all his race by the Marquis de Rennepont in 1682. A victim of the times, from the manœuvres by which the Society of Jesus has seized on all his wealth, M. de Rennepont but too well understood the invincible power of this association. He desired to unite his descendants in order to give them strength, hoping that their association in the love of good and the love of their neighbour would be a striking example for the world and a defence for the oppressed. He took care to endow them for this end with a really kingly fortune. Fifty thousand crowns, escaped from the spoliation of the rest of his property, were by him deposited in the hands of the Israelites, who transmitted this deposit from generation to generation until the term of one hundred and fifty revolving years, that is to say, until the thirteenth of February, 1832, the day appointed for the opening of the marquis's will and the distribution of the inheritance.

The depositaries had placed the fifty thousand crowns out at interest at five per cent., according to the wishes of the testator. At the expiration of the one hundred and fifty years the bequest of the Marquis de Rennepont has accumulated to 225,950,000 francs, of which 13,775,000 francs is to be deducted for expenses, leaving 212,175,000 francs (8,487,000*l.* sterling) to divide amongst the heirs.

This is a great prize to be contended for. Let us add, that the acquiring inheritances is a plague-spot in society which it is very much to the purpose and very useful to point out in the midst of those associations which France possesses. This plague is not a fresh one. The hunting after legacies was one of the principal occupations of the degenerate Greeks and Romans. How many epigrams the satirists of other days have flung out against legacy hunters! In this respect antiquity has nothing to

envy modern times, and modern times are very far from having allowed these traditions of antiquity to perish.

None will have a right to share in the inheritance of the Marquis de Rennepont who is not present in person at the opening of the will on the thirteenth of February, 1832. To recall this obligation to posterity, the testator had distributed to each of the members of his family a medal, which was to serve at once for claim and memento.

A few months before the appointed epoch the Rennepont family comprised seven representatives, holding different positions in the scale of society. These were:

The Prince Djalma, a young Indian full of generous feelings and enthusiasm. He is a type borrowed from the old Asiatic world, and placed with the abrupt right-mindedness of his instincts, but also with full possession of his faculties, in contact with our delicacies, our susceptibility, and conventional ideas, born in a state of civilisation which seems to have effaced every original trace.

Mlle. Adrienne de Cardoville, a noble and independent soul, open to all fine sentiments, reflecting all great and good things, sensitive but firm, ardent but chaste, a singular compound, but yet most admirable, a pagan spirit with a Christian education.

M. Hardy, of refined taste, with excessive sensitiveness. His mother called him the "Sensitive Plant," says the author of "The Wandering Jew," "as he had one of those organisations of a fineness and delicacy as exquisite as expansive, as loving as noble and generous, but of such tender sensibility that the least ruffle made them shrink and retreat into themselves."

The Abbé Gabriel is a character resplendent with goodness and virtue. He is the personification of that portion of the clergy which is, perhaps, not the highest in place, but which practises the greatest virtues in a modest rank. Nothing can be more holy and more respectable than the character of this young man, who

has already undergone martyrdom. Whilst painting with warmth so many virtues, has not M. Eugène Sue proved that he does not confound the true priest with the bad ministers? and that, in attacking dangerous, immoral, impious doctrines, he has not for a moment misrepresented the merit and holiness of Christian morality?

Then come the two daughters of Marshal Simon; the two fair and blushing flowers reared beneath a foreign sky. Their innocence excites respect, their candour creates compassion.

The last scion of the Marquis de Rennepont is a workman, whose name betrays his disorderly habits. Couche-tout-Nud floats between the path of labour and dissipation. He inclines to good, but allows himself to be attracted towards evil. His heart is good, but his head is bad. The weakness of his disposition and the fickleness of his imagination render him the easy victim of every calculating, cool villain who may desire to have an influence over his mind.

In face of this family we have placed the Jesuit Rodin, in whom is personified all the skill and all the vices by which the dangerous company of the sons of Loyola are distinguished in history. Diabolical ambition, learned hypocrisy, obstinate constancy, due, perhaps, to the feeling of strength and vitality of the Order, indifference as to the means — always sanctified by the end, — in fine, the infinite resources and marvellous clearness of a mind continually devoted to the pursuit of one design. Such are the principal features of Rodin's character.

The Company had prepared long since the plot which was to acquire for them the inheritance of M. de Rennepont. Its first care was to obtain an heir who would cede his rights to the Company. Thus Gabriel was ensnared in the nets of the Society of Jesus. He pronounced his vows, by virtue of which all the property

that might fall to him would become the acquisition of the community of which he forms a portion. All the efforts of the Jesuits then tended to separate and keep away the other heirs, in order that Gabriel might accomplish singly the clause of the will, which requires the presence of the descendant of the Marquis de Rennepont on the thirteenth of February, 1832, in the house of the Rue St. François.

Père d'Aigrigny, an ancient *émigré*, formerly a colonel, and now a Jesuit, was at first charged with the conduct of this affair. This man is far from having the superiority of Rodin. The material modes, the forcible acts, the vulgar use of strength, are the levers he employs against the Renneponts.

Djalma is still in India. The young daughters of Marshal Simon have quitted Siberia under the care of an old soldier of the old Imperial Guard, named Baudoin, to whom an adventure, as brave as burlesque, has given the name of Dagobert; but they have not yet crossed the frontier of Germany. It is necessary to prevent the prince from setting out, and the young orphans from arriving. All three are to be taken to prison by skilful measures, which will make the prince appear as a member of the redoubtable association of Indian Stranglers, and which, by depriving Dagobert and his pupils of their papers, and exciting the old soldier to commit an act of legitimate anger, will deliver them into the hands of the burgomaster as turbulent and vagabond. And the author describes, in passing, the prodigies of Indian nature, the mysteries of its ancient civilisation; he conducts us to the dens of wild beasts, and sketches their tamer a hundred times more hideous than the brutes he tames.

In France personal violences present more difficulties and dangers. But the laws intended to protect society become in the hands of the Jesuits the most fearful weapon which can be made use of.

Mlle. de Cardoville possesses in a very high degree

the taste which all right minds have for moral and physical beauty. She has about her servants elegantly clad, she unites in her apartments all the marvels of luxury, which are purposely made to pass as insanity. Then, too strong in her virtue, and yielding to an extreme feeling of independence, she often leaps over the reserves which our customs impose on a young lady. She disdains the patronage of her aunt, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, an ambitious, jealous woman affiliated with the Society of Jesus. Is it not easy to pass her off as lunatic? The physician, Baleinier, another Jesuit, has acquired Adrienne's confidence, and undertakes to effect this.

One of the most touching and real episodes in the romance is that in which Mlle. de Cardoville, confined by stratagem in a wretched lunatic asylum, handed over to the repulsive attentions of sordid and coarse women, alarmed by the horrid cries which madness utters in this horrible house, feels her reason troubled gradually, and begins to believe that she is really mad, and that Doctor Baleinier has told the truth.

Besides other means frequently employed by the legacy hunters is that of shutting up legitimate heirs under a pretext of madness. The difference between sanity and insanity is not always easy to decide upon. There are very few persons who have not furnished their family, once in their lives, with a pretext for shutting them up in bedlam.

The Company of Jesus has now no other rivals than M. Hardy and Couche-tout-Nud, the workman. This latter is not very redoubtable. They lend him money, which he spends in feasts and orgies; the day of payment arrives, and he is cast in prison for debt. As to the skilful and enlightened manufacturer, he is not caught in such coarse snares. His heart is assailed. A very dear friend, the secret instrument of the Jesuits, summons him to his aid some days before the thirteenth

of February. M. Hardy goes, forgetting all for the service of a man who betrays him.

The Company, then, has reached its aim, *per fas et nefas*, by working out good feelings and bad passions. Vice and virtue are but the instruments of ambitious hypocrisy. It is true that Prince Djalma has contrived to escape from prison; and the daughters of Marshal Simon, with their conductor, have been miraculously freed. All have reached Paris in time; but a powerful narcotic administered to the prince, on the eve of the thirteenth of February, has plunged him in a leaden slumber, lasting during all the day appointed for reading the will. And the marshal's daughters, minors carried off by aid of a pious fraud, have been shut up in a convent, in which they were occupied with the care of their salvation, until the too tardy law should come and set them free, after the thirteenth of February shall have passed away.

The day arrives, — the day of which the Company had never lost sight for a single moment, during a century and a half. The walled-up house of the Rue St. François is at length opened. The will has been read; twelve strikes, and Gabriel is the only heir who is present. Already the Abbé Rodin has seized on the treasure of the Renneponts, when a female appears on the threshold; it is Herodias, the sister of the Jew,[1] like him condemned to wander over the face of the whole earth, a symbol, like himself, of that portion of the human race which God appears to have disinherited, — of those poor creatures who, in all parts of the world, drag on a miserable existence, sinking beneath the burden of their own miseries and the wretchedness of their isolation and their impotency.

[1] Here is some error; Herodias (chap. xiv. of St. Matthew's Gospel) was the wife of Philip, Herod the tetrarch's brother, and neither she, nor her daughter, who brought the head of John the Baptist to her mother in a charger, could have been sister to the (Wandering) Jew, who was a poor, distressed shoemaker. — *English Translator.*

Herodias discovers a codicil, which postpones for three months the distribution of the inheritance, and again puts everything in question.

Henceforth the part of the Company of Jesus will be more thorny, for the heirs of the Rennepont family are aware of their plots. The Abbé d'Aigrigny is not competent to this, and Rodin will undertake it. As the Abbé d'Aigrigny has done, as Rodin declares, so many gross things, great things, coarse things, so many little, puerile, secret things will he, Rodin, do. This will be the triumph of mind for the Society of Jesus. Rodin will work upon the passions, — if need be he will excite them, — he will become, if possible, the intimate friend of those whom he seeks to destroy. He will not lay a coarse plot for them; the mischief shall come from a third or fourth hand.

To begin, Rodin pretends to attack the Jesuits. He first betrays the interests of his Company, the better to serve them afterwards. He restores Mlle. de Cardoville to liberty; brings back the daughters of Maréchal Simon to their father; gains the friendship and confidence of Prince Djalma. Besides, he well sums up his own conduct.

"I have had," he says, "ability sufficient to play the most foolish game for six weeks. Such as you see me, I have played the amiable with a grisette; have talked of progress, humanity, emancipation of women, with a young girl of excited imagination. I have talked of the great Napoleon Buonapartean idolatry with a silly old soldier; I have discoursed of imperial glory, humiliation of France, hope in the King of Rome, with a brave man, a marshal of France, who, if he has his heart full of admiration for that robber of thrones, who was tied by the leg at St. Helena, has his head as hollow and sonorous as a war trumpet. I have done mighty well, i' faith, for I have listened to the feelings of love from a young wild tiger."

With all these puerilities, Rodin obtains immense advantages. In fact, if he creates in the hearts of the prince and Mlle. de Cardoville reciprocal love, it is in the hope that this double passion will produce terrific storms. Already has he sown jealousy between the two lovers. It is true that a woman who defends her happiness is very strong. Mlle. de Cardoville says Rodin has, therefore, not succeeded in separating for very long the two lovers who sought each other.

But, in compensation for this check, how much misery and ruin has not this Jesuit created with his small means — his puerile and secret manœuvres!

Couche-tout-Nud has died in the midst of an orgy, in a delirium of drunkenness; the Society of Jesus had opened to him a road of foolish joys, unrestrained pleasures, debauches of wine and brandy, to lead him to the grave. At the moment when he sinks, struck by the cholera, even in the very room which had witnessed his last bacchic exploits, the pitiless avidity of the Jesuits deals him the last blow by revealing to him the dishonour into which they had contrived to precipitate the woman he loved.

M. Hardy had a friendship, — that friendship is deceived; he had a love, — that love is broken; there remained to him as a last resource activity in his affairs, — his factory is burnt down. He sinks overwhelmed, without strength, into the hands of Rodin, who hands him over to D'Aigrigny. The cares and counsels of the reverend father are not slow in making a gangrene of the wound in his heart, and rendering it incurable. Henceforth retreat, obscurity, in which they weep in silence, and uncontrolled, becomes the sole object of M. Hardy's desires. He will abandon all his interests, all his hopes, to the good fathers, who so generously console him, and he will henceforth ask only for rest until he dies.

Then those strange calumnies spread against the

Maréchal Simon prepare him for the chilling, cutting reception in society, where his glorious deeds ought to produce sympathy, if not admiration and respect. Anonymous letters create, from time to time, coldness and fear between himself and his two daughters. The Company endeavours at the same time to urge the maréchal into a Buonapartean conspiracy, which would, doubtless, be as soon revealed as plotted, and which would thus give the maréchal a prison or exile.

Thus far has Rodin advanced without apparent exertion or direct means, but merely profiting by events, or in contriving to produce them. However, destiny has served him wonderfully.

The cholera, that great purveyor of inheritances, has come to his aid. Amongst all the scenes so powerfully striking which this scourge has inspired M. Eugène Sue withal, we will only refer to that in which the Abbé d'Aigrigny, pursued as a poisoner by the excited mob to the church of Notre-Dame, is saved by the intervention of Gabriel. We cannot dwell too strongly on the noble and sublime actions performed by this priest, for M. Eugène Sue gives by these, as we have already said, the decided lie to those who accuse him of wilfully misrepresenting the noble inspiration which a Christian may have in giving effect to his belief.

We will not conclude this faint and ineffective analysis of a work full of warmth and life, without adding a few words as to the accessory figures whom M. Eugène Sue has grouped around the principal personages in his veritable romance. These are, amongst others,—

La Mayeux, a poor humpbacked girl of the lowest class, often out of work, and consequently without firing, without bread, almost without garments, who undergoes every kind of disgrace with which nature and fate overwhelm her with a nobleness and delicacy with which a deep and vast sense of duty inspires her.

Agricola Baudoin, the admirable type of a workman,

— generous and good; noble even as the proudest of patricians; devoted, brave, and intelligent. This type is not purely imaginary; it is the portrait of which the originals are very fortunately numerous.

Françoise Baudoin, his mother, whose face must always be met in a work full of intrigue carried on under the mask of religion, — Françoise Baudoin is unreservedly under the domination of the Jesuit, her confessor. They have profited by her ignorance and credulity to lead her on to actions the most reprehensible, and yet making her view all as most praiseworthy. It is she who sends Maréchal Simon's daughters to the convent; not as the Company of Jesus designs, to keep them incarcerated until the day of the reading of the will, but to instruct them in the Catholic religion.

Then we have the Queen-Bacchanal and Rose-Pompon. The former is La Mayeux's sister, but as handsome as her younger sister is plain, as light as La Mayeux is serious. She becomes the queen of public balls and the carnival. Then impelled by misery, and Rodin aiding, she falls a step still lower. She expiates her faults by a suicide. As to Rose-Pompon, she is as smiling as fair Céphyse, as handsome, and not less light. What will be the end of her grisette's life — a life cast at random, and passed in all the *chaumières* and hermitages of the Quartier Latin? This the author has not yet told us.

Finally, we have reached these results. One is dead, Couche-tout-Nud. The Society of Jesus is substituted also for two others, Gabriel and Hardy.

There are only left the two daughters of Maréchal Simon, Mlle. de Cardoville, and Djalma. They are still struggling; but the maréchal is already almost *hors-de-combat.*

Djalma and Mlle. de Cardoville are in full power and strength. They love and are reunited. May they escape safe and fortunately from the hands of these potent adversaries!

# Part XII.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE COUNCIL.

THE following scene passes at the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, the day after that on which the reconciliation of Maréchal Simon and his daughters took place.

The princess was listening to Rodin with the most profound attention. The reverend *père* was, according to his usual habit, standing up and leaning against the mantelpiece, with his hands in the hind pocket of his old brown coat; his large shoes, covered with mud, had left their print on the Turkey carpet which was in front of the fireplace. A deep satisfaction was visible in the cadaverous countenance of the Jesuit.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, dressed with a sort of discreet coquettishness, which beseems a mother of the church, never took her eyes off Rodin, who had completely supplanted Père d'Aigrigny in the mind of the devotee. The phlegm, audacity, keen intelligence, and the rude and despotic disposition of the ex-*socius*, imposed on this haughty dame, subjugating and inspiring her with an admiration that was sincere, almost with a liking; and even the cynic personal neglect, the repartee of this almost brutal priest, pleased her, and was a kind of coarse relish, which she preferred to the exquisite manners and perfumed elegance of the handsome Père d'Aigrigny.

"Yes, madame," said Rodin, in a tone impressed with conviction, yet guarded, for these worthies do not unmask themselves even amongst their accomplices, "yes,

madame, the news from our house of retreat at St. Herem is excellent. M. Hardy, the strong-minded, the free-thinker, is at last in the fold of our Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Romish Church."

Rodin, having uttered these last words hypocritically and nasally, the devotee bowed her head reverentially.

"Grace has reached this impious man," continued Rodin, "and touched him so deeply that in his ascetic enthusiasm he is anxious at once to pronounce the vows which will bind him to our holy Company."

"So soon, father?" said the princess, astonished.

"Our institutes are opposed to this precipitation, unless, indeed, in the case of a penitent *in articulo mortis* (at the point of death), who considers it as vitally beneficial for his salvation to die in our habit, and leave us his property, for the greater glory of the Lord."

"And is M. Hardy in so desperate a condition, *mon père?*"

"He is devoured by fever. After so many severe shocks, which have so miraculously impelled him into the way of salvation," continued Rodin, with emphasis, "this man of so frail and delicate a temperament is at this time almost entirely overcome morally and physically. Thus, austerities, macerations, the divine joys of ecstasy, will prepare his way very speedily in the path of eternal life; and it is probable that before many days —"

And the priest shook his head with a sinister air.

"So soon as that, father?"

"It is almost certain; and I have, therefore, making use of my dispensations, been able to receive the dear penitent, *in articulo mortis*, as a member of our holy Company, to which, according to the rules, he has bequeathed his property present and to come. So that from this hour he has nothing to think of but the salvation of his soul, — another victim to philosophy snatched from the claws of Satan."

"Ah, my father!" exclaimed the devotee, with admiration, "it is a miraculous conversion. The Père d'Aigrigny told me how much you had struggled against the influence of the Abbé Gabriel."

"The Abbé Gabriel," said Rodin, "has been punished for interfering in matters that did not concern him, and for other things also. I required his interdiction, and he has been interdicted by his bishop, and recalled from his curacy. It is said that, by way of passing his time, he goes to the temporary hospitals for the cholera patients, to give Christian consolation; there is no objection to that. But the heresy of this perambulating consoler is smelt a league off."

"He is a dangerous spirit," remarked the princess, "for he has no slight influence over his fellows; and it has required all your admirable, irresistible eloquence, to overcome and crush the detestable counsels of this Abbé Gabriel, who took it into his head to persuade M. Hardy to return to a wordly life. Really, father, you are a St. Chrysostom."

"Good, good, madame," replied Rodin, very insensible to flattery; "reserve this for others."

"I say you are a Saint Chrysostom, *mon père*," repeated the princess, energetically, "for like him, you deserve the name of St. John with the golden mouth."

"Come, come, madame," said Rodin, coarsely, and shrugging his shoulders, "I, a golden mouth? Pooh! my lips are too livid, and my teeth too black. You jest with your golden mouth!"

"But, father —"

"But, madame, I am not caught with such bird-lime," replied Rodin, harshly. "I hate compliments, and never pay them."

"Your modesty must excuse me, father," said the devotee, humbly. "I could not resist the happiness of testifying to you my admiration; for as you had predicted, or foreseen a few months back, there are already

two of the members of the Rennepont family disinterested as to the question of the inheritance."

Rodin looked at Madame de Saint-Dizier with a softer and approving air, when he heard her thus phrase the position of the two defunct heirs. For according to Rodin, M. Hardy, by his donation and his self-destroying asceticism, no longer belonged to this world.

The devotee proceeded:

"One of these men, a miserable artisan, has hastened his own end by his excess of vice. You have led the other into the way of salvation, by arousing his loving and tender qualities. Then, let your foresight have due praise, *mon père*, for you said, 'It is to the passions I will address myself, in order to arrive at my end.'"

"Do not glorify me in such a hurry, I beg," interposed Rodin, impatiently. "What about your niece, and the Indian, and the two daughters of Maréchal Simon? Have these individuals made a Christian end, or are they disinterested in the question of the inheritance, that we should boast thus soon?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, then, you see, madame, let us not waste time in congratulating ourselves on the past, let us think of the future. The great day approaches — the first of June is not so far off. Heaven grant that we do not see four of the surviving members of the family continuing to live in impenitence until this time, and possessing this vast inheritance, — the means of fresh wickedness in their hands, and a means of glory to the Lord, and to his church, out of the hands of our Company."

"True, father."

"Apropos of that, you should see your agents on the subject of your niece."

"I have seen them, father; and however uncertain may be the chance of which I have spoken to you, it is still worth the experiment. I shall know to-day, I hope, if it be legally possible."

"Perhaps, then, in the strait in which this fresh position may place her, we may find means to arrive at her conversion," said Rodin, with a strange and hideous smile; "for until now, since she so fatally became reconciled with the Indian, the happiness of these two heathens appears as unchanging and bright as a diamond, — nothing can touch it — not even Faringhea's tooth. But, let us hope that the Lord will do justice to such vain and guilty happiness."

This conversation was interrupted by Père d'Aigrigny, who entered the salon with a triumphant air, and exclaimed at the door:

"Victory!"

"What mean you?" inquired the princess.

"He has gone, went this very night," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"Who?" asked Rodin.

"Maréchal Simon," replied Père d'Aigrigny.

"At last," said Rodin, unable to conceal his extreme joy.

"No doubt it was his conversation with General d'Havrincourt which decided him," cried the devotee; "for I knew he had an interview with the general, who, like so many others, believed in the reports, more or less founded, which I set afloat. Every means is good that may reach the impious," added the princess, by way of slightly correcting herself.

"Have you any details?" inquired Rodin.

"I have just left Robert," replied Père d'Aigrigny; "his description, his age, correspond with the age and description of the maréchal, — he has gone with the papers. One thing, however, greatly surprised your emissary."

"What was that?" asked Rodin.

"Up to this time he had had incessantly to combat the maréchal's hesitation; he had, beside, remarked his gloomy, despairing air. Yesterday, however, he found

him with an air so happy, so joyous, that he could not help asking the cause of this change."

"Well?" said Rodin and the princess at the same time, and greatly surprised.

"'I am really the happiest man in the world,' replied the maréchal; 'for I go with joy and happiness to accomplish a sacred duty.'"

The three actors in this scene looked at each other in silence.

"And who could have effected this sudden change in the maréchal's mind?" said the princess, with a pensive air. "We relied fully on annoyances, irritations of all sorts, to throw him into this adventurous enterprise."

"I cannot fathom it," said Rodin, after some meditation; "but, no matter, he has gone, and we must not lose a moment in acting with his daughters. Has he taken that cursed soldier with him?"

"No," said the Père d'Aigrigny, "unfortunately, no. Distrustful, and informed of what has passed, he has redoubled his precautions; and a man who might have been so useful to us against him, in any desperate emergency, has been struck by this contagion."

"Who is that?" asked the princess.

"Morok. I might have relied on him in all, for all, and through all, and he is lost to us; for, if he escape this pestilence, it is feared that he will fall a victim to a horrible and incurable disease."

"What do you mean?"

"A few days since he was bitten by one of the large dogs in his menagerie, and next day the animal went mad."

"How horrible!" exclaimed the princess. "And where is the wretched man?"

"They have conveyed him to one of the temporary hospitals established in Paris, for only the cholera has as yet declared itself with him; and, I repeat, it is a two-

fold misfortune, for he was a man devoted, resolute, and ready for any and every thing. But the soldier, the guardian of the orphans, will be inaccessable, and yet through him only can we reach the daughters of Maréchal Simon."

"That is evident," replied Rodin, musing.

"Especially since the anonymous letters have aroused his suspicions," added the Père d'Aigrigny; "and —"

"Apropos of anonymous letters," said Rodin, suddenly interrupting Père d'Aigrigny, "there is a circumstance you ought to know, and I'll tell you why."

"What is it about?"

"Besides the letters you know of, Maréchal Simon has received many others of which you are ignorant, and in which, by every possible means, it was tried to incite his wrath against you, by reminding him of the many causes he had for hating you, and jeering him because your sacred character placed you beyond the reach of his vengeance."

Père d'Aigrigny looked at Rodin with surprise, and exclaimed, turning red in spite of himself, "But for what purpose has your reverence acted in this way?"

"In the first place, to turn away from myself any suspicions that might be awakened by these letters; then, in order to increase the rage of the maréchal to madness, by incessantly reminding him both of the just grounds of his hatred against you and the impossibility of his touching you. This, joined to other exciting causes of anger, vexation, and irritation, which the brutal passions of this man of war would make to boil within him, must impel him to this crazy enterprise, which is the consequence, and the punishment, of his idolatry for a miserable usurper."

"Yes," said Père d'Aigrigny, with a constrained air; "but I would observe to your reverence that it might, perhaps, be dangerous thus far to excite Maréchal Simon against me."

"Wherefore?" inquired Rodin, fixing a piercing glance on Père d'Aigrigny.

"Because the maréchal, urged beyond bearing, and recollecting nothing but our mutual hatred, might seek — might meet me —"

"Well, and what then?" asked Rodin.

"Well, he might forget that I was a priest; and then —"

"Ah, you are afraid?" said Rodin, disdainfully, and interrupting D'Aigrigny.

At these words of Rodin, "You are afraid," the reverend father sprung from his seat, then resuming his *sang-froid*, he added:

"Your reverence is right. Yes, I should be afraid — yes, under such circumstances, I should be afraid that I might forget I am a priest, and recollect only that I have been a soldier."

"Really?" said Rodin, with supreme contempt; "and are you really, then, at this absurd and savage point of honour? Has not your cassock extinguished this vivid fire? And this swordsman, whose poor brain, empty and hollow as a drum, I was sure to ferment by pronouncing some magic words for such stupid fighters, 'Military honour — oath — Napoleon II.' — so, had this swordsman conducted himself toward you with any violence, it really then would have required some effort on your part to have remained calm?"

And again Rodin fastened his hawk's gaze on the reverend *père*.

"It is useless, I think, for your reverence to make any such supposition," said D'Aigrigny, who with difficulty repressed his emotion.

"As your superior," replied Rodin, sternly, "I have a right to ask you what you would have done if Maréchal Simon had raised his hand against you?"

"Sir!" cried the reverend father.

"There are no sirs here, we are priests," said Rodin, harshly.

Père d'Aigrigny bowed his head, and with difficulty repressed his anger.

"I ask you," continued Rodin, pertinaciously, "what would be your course if Maréchal Simon had struck you? Is that a plain question?"

"Cease, I entreat," said Père d'Aigrigny. "Cease."

"Or, if you like it better, — suppose he had smitten you on both cheeks," continued Rodin, with cool doggedness.

Père d'Aigrigny, pale, his teeth clenched, his hands clasped, was a prey to a kind of vertigo, at the bare supposition of such an outrage, whilst Rodin, who had not, unquestionably, urged the question but from a strong motive, raised his flaccid eyelids, and seemed to watch intently the significant symptoms which developed themselves on the disturbed countenance of the ex-colonel.

The devotee, more and more under the charm of the ex-*socius*, seeing the position of D'Aigrigny was as painful as it was false, felt her admiration for Rodin increase.

At length, the Père d'Aigrigny, resuming his *sang-froid* gradually, replied to Rodin, in a tone of forced calmness:

"If I had to undergo such an outrage, I would entreat the Lord to give me resignation and humility."

"And assuredly the Lord would hear your prayers," replied Rodin, coldly, satisfied with the experiment he had tried on D'Aigrigny. "Besides, you are now forewarned; and it is very unlikely," he added, with an atrocious smile, "that the Maréchal Simon will return here, in order to put your humility to so rude a test. But if he should return," and Rodin again fixed a deep and searching glance on the reverend *père*, — "if he should return, you will display, I doubt not, to this brutal swordsman, in spite of his violence, all the resignation and humility of a soul that is really Christian."

Two knocks on the door, discreetly given, interrupted the conversation.

A *valet de chambre* entered, bearing on a waiter a large sealed envelope, which he handed to the princess, and then left the room.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, having by a look requested Rodin's leave to open the letter, hastily perused it, and a malignant satisfaction overspread her features.

"There is hope!" she exclaimed, addressing Rodin. "The demand is strictly legal; and the consequences may be such as we desire. In a word, my niece may from to-morrow be threatened with complete destitution. She, so prodigal. What a change for her whole life!"

"Then, there may be at last some hold on this untamable character," said Rodin, with a meditative air; "for until now, all has failed. They say, certain happiness makes persons invulnerable;" and he bit his flat and dirty nails.

"But to obtain the result I desire, I must exasperate the pride of my niece; and it is, therefore, absolutely requisite that I see her, and converse with her," added Madame de Saint-Dizier, musingly.

"Mlle. de Cardoville will refuse this interview," remarked Père d'Aigrigny.

"Perhaps," replied the princess; "she is so happy that her audacity must be at its height. Yes, yes, I know her. I will write to her in such a way that she will come."

"Do you think so?" said Rodin, with a doubtful air.

"Do not doubt it, father," replied the princess, "she will come; and, once her pride called in question, we may hope for everything."

"We must act, then, madame," said Rodin, "and that, too, promptly; the moment approaches; hatred and distrust are aroused, — there is not a moment to lose."

"As to hatred," replied the princess, "Mlle. de Car-

doville has seen how the process she began has ended in reference to what she calls her detention in a lunatic asylum, and the sequestration of the Simon girls in the convent of Ste. Marie. Thank Heaven, we have friends everywhere; and I know from good authority that it will be rejected for want of sufficient proofs, in spite of the anxiety and interference of certain parliamentary magistrates, who shall be marked — and well marked."

"Under these circumstances," replied Rodin, "the departure of the maréchal gives us great latitude, and we must act immediately with these girls."

"But how?" inquired the princess.

"We must first see them," answered Rodin, "talk with them, study them, and then act."

"But the soldier will not leave them for a second," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"Then," replied Rodin, "we must talk to them before the soldier and gain him over to ourselves."

"He! The hope is madness!" cried Père d'Aigrigny. "You do not know his military probity, — you do not know the man!"

"Not know him?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "Did not Mlle. de Cardoville present me to him as her liberator, when I denounced you as the soul of this machination? Was it not I who restored to him his ridiculous imperial relic, his cross of honour, at Doctor Baleinier's? Was it not I who brought the two girls from the convent, and placed them in their father's arms?"

"Yes," replied the princess; "but since then my cursed niece has divined all, discovered everything. She told you herself, father —"

"That she considered me as her mortal enemy," said Rodin. "True. But has she said so to the maréchal? Has she named me to him? And, if she has, has the maréchal told it to the soldier? It may be so; but it is not certain. Under any circumstances we must ascer-

tain this. If the soldier treats me as an unmasked foe, we shall see; but at first I shall accost him as a friend."

"And when?" asked the devotee.

"To-morrow morning," replied Rodin.

"Oh, oh, my dear father!" exclaimed Madame de Saint-Dizier, with affright. "If the soldier takes you for an enemy, beware!"

"I am always on my guard, madame. I have made more terrible fellows than he hear reason;" and the Jesuit smiled a ghastly smile, and showed his black teeth. "The cholera, for instance!"

"But if he treats you as an enemy, and refuses to admit you, how will you contrive to obtain access to the daughters of Maréchal Simon?" inquired D'Aigrigny.

"I really do not know," answered Rodin; "but as I mean to do so, I shall do so."

"*Mon père*," said the princess, suddenly, and after meditating, "these young girls have never seen me. If, without giving any name, I could get to see them —"

"That, madame, would be perfectly useless, for I must first know what I shall resolve upon with respect to these orphan girls. At any risk, I will see them, therefore, and have a long conversation with them; then my plan once decided on, your aid may be useful to me. Under any circumstances, be so kind as to be ready to-morrow morning, in order to accompany me, madame."

"Where to, *mon père?*"

"To Maréchal Simon's."

"To his house?"

"Not exactly to his house. You will go in your carriage, I then take a hackney-coach. I shall endeavour to get access to these young girls; and, during this time, you will await me at some small distance from the maréchal's abode. If I succeed, if I require your aid, I will come to you, and you will receive my instructions, and nothing will appear as if concerted between us."

"Very well, reverend father; but I really tremble

when I think of your interview with that brutal soldier," said the princess.

"The Lord will watch over his servant, madame," replied Rodin. "As for you, father," he added, addressing D'Aigrigny, "send off to Vienna instantly the note prepared, that it may announce your knowledge of the departure and expected arrival of the maréchal. All is foreseen. This evening I will write more fully."

Next morning, about eight o'clock, Madame de Saint-Dizier, in her carriage, and Rodin in his hackney-coach, went towards the house of Maréchal Simon.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### HAPPINESS.

Maréchal Simon had been gone two days. It was eight o'clock in the morning, and Dagobert, walking with the greatest care on the tips of his toes, that the floor might not creak, crossed the salon which led into the bedchamber of Rose and Blanche, and placed his ear discreetly at the door of the young girls' apartment. Killjoy followed his master in the same fashion, and seemed to walk with equal precaution. The countenance of the soldier was disturbed and uneasy, and he muttered to himself:

"Let us hope these dear children have heard nothing during the night that would alarm them; and it would be better that they should not know of this event until it cannot be longer concealed. It might make them very melancholy; and the poor little dears are so gay and so happy, since they knew how dearly their father loves them. They bore his departure so well, and they must not be told of the misfortune of this night, it would distress them so much."

Then listening again, the soldier continued:

"I hear nothing — nothing! They always awake early, too; perhaps it is their grief."

Dagobert's reflections were interrupted by two bursts of hearty laughter, which suddenly sounded in the interior of the young girls' bedchamber.

"Come, come; they are not so sad as I thought,"

said Dagobert, breathing a little more at his ease; "probably they know nothing."

The laughter then increased so much, that the soldier, delighted at such gaiety, so very unusual to "his children," felt himself at first quite affected, and, for a moment, his eyes became moistened, when he remembered that the orphans had at last resumed the happy serenity of their years. Then passing from softness to joy, his ear still listening, his body half bent, his hands on his knees, Dagobert rejoicing, happy, his lips betraying a mute pleasure, shaking his head a little, he accompanied, with a still laugh, the increasing hilarity of the two girls. At last, as nothing is more contagious than mirth, and the worthy soldier felt at his ease, he concluded by laughing out loud, and with all his might, without knowing why, and only because Rose and Blanche laughed with all their heart.

Killjoy, unaccustomed to see his master in such high spirits, looked at him, first in deep and silent astonishment, and then began to bark with an interrogating air.

At this sound, the laugh of the two girls suddenly ceased, and a clear voice, somewhat tremulous from its joyfulness, cried:

"What, Killjoy! Is it you who have come to awaken us?"

Killjoy comprehended, shook his tail, laid back his ears, and, lying down close at the door, replied by a low whine to the call of his young mistress.

"Monsieur Killjoy," said the voice of Rose, who could scarcely contain herself from a fresh burst of laughter, "you are very early."

"Then could you tell us the hour, if you please, Monsieur Killjoy?" added Blanche.

"Yes, mesdemoiselles, it has struck eight o'clock," suddenly responded the deep voice of Dagobert, who accompanied this joke with an immense burst of laughter.

A slight cry of joyful surprise was heard, then Rose said:

"Good morning, Dagobert."

"Good morning, my dears. You are very lazy this morning."

"That is not our fault; our dear Augustine has not yet been to us," said Rose. "We were waiting for her."

"That is it," said Dagobert to himself, his features becoming overcast. Then he replied aloud, with some embarrassment in his tone, for the worthy fellow was a bad hand at falsehood, "My children, your *gouvernante* went out early this morning. She has gone into the country on business, and will not come back for some days; so to-day you had better get up by yourselves."

"That good Madame Augustine!" said Blanche, with interest. "I hope it is not anything unpleasant that she has gone away so suddenly, is it, Dagobert?"

"No, no, not at all; it is on business," replied the soldier, "to see one of her relations."

"Oh, so much the better," said Rose. "Well, Dagobert, when we call, you may come in."

"I will return in a quarter of an hour," said the soldier, walking away; then he thought, "I must put that booby, Jocrisse, on his guard, for the fellow is such a babbling blockhead that he will blab everything."

The name of this supposed dolt will serve as a natural transition to let us know the cause of the merry mood of the two sisters, who were laughing at the numerous silly tricks of this simpleton.

The two young girls had risen and were both dressed, having assisted each other. Rose had dressed Blanche's hair, and it was Blanche's turn to dress Rose's hair. The two young creatures thus grouped offered a picture that was very graceful.

Rose was seated before a toilet, her sister standing behind her arranging her soft, chestnut hair. Happy, joyous age, — still so close to infancy, that its present

felicity soon causes a forgetfulness of past suffering! Then the orphans felt more than joy, it was happiness, pure, deep, and, henceforth, unutterable happiness. Their father adored them; their presence, far from being painful to him, filled him with delight. At last assured himself of the love of his children, he had no longer, thanks to them, any sorrow to dread. For these three beings, so certain of their mutual and ineffaceable affection, what was a momentary separation?

This stated and understood, we may conceive the innocent gaiety of the two sisters, in spite of the departure of their father, and the joyous, happy expression which animated their lovely countenances, on which was already reviving their colour, which had so much faded. Their reliance on the future gave them an air of resolution and decision, which added an additional charm to their lovely features.

Blanche, whilst arranging her sister's hair, dropped the comb, and as she stooped to pick it up Rose anticipated her, and gave it to her, saying:

"If it is broken, you must put it in the basket for the handles."

And the two girls laughed heartily at these words, which referred to a notable absurdity of Jocrisse. The supposed simpleton had broken the handle of a cup, and the *gouvernante* of the young girls reprimanding him, he had answered:

"Be easy, madame; I have put the handle in the basket for handles."

"The basket for handles?"

"Yes, madame, it is in that that I put all the handles I break, or shall break."

"Gracious goodness!" said Rose, wiping her eyes, moist with mirthful tears, "how ridiculous to laugh at such absurdities!"

"Yet it is so droll," answered Blanche, "how can we help it?"

"All I regret is, that our father is not here to laugh also."

"He is so happy when he hears us merry."

"We must write to him to-day the story of our basket for handles."

"And that of the feather-brush, in order to show him that, according to our promise, we have not any uneasiness during his absence."

"Write to him, sister? No. You know very well he will write to us, but we cannot reply to him."

"That's true. Then — an idea! Let us still write to him at his address here. Dagobert will put our letters in the post, and, when he returns, our father will read our correspondence."

"You are right. What a charming idea! What things we will write to him, for he loves our little follies so much."

"And so do we. We must confess that we like nothing better than to be gay."

"Oh, certainly! The last words of our father have given us so much courage, have they not, sister?"

"When I hear them, I feel quite brave about his departure."

"And when he said to us, 'My children, I will confide to you all I can confide to you. I had to fulfil a sacred duty, for that I am compelled to quit you for some time; and although I was so blind as to doubt your affection, I could not resolve on abandoning you, yet my conscience was disquieted, agitated; my chagrin so overwhelmed me that I had not the strength to make up my mind, and my days passed on in hesitations, filled with anguish; but once certain of your affection, all these doubts have suddenly ceased. I have felt that I was not sacrificing one duty to another, and so laying up remorse for myself, but that it was necessary to accomplish two duties at once, duties both sacred, and which I can now fulfil with joy, heart, and happiness.'"

"Ah, go on, go on, sister!" exclaimed Blanche, rising to approach Rose, "it seems as if I heard our father; and let us recall his words, as they will support us if we have any feelings of sorrow at his absence."

"Yes, will they not, sister? But, as our father said besides, 'Instead of being vexed at my departure, be glad, be proud I leave you, in order to effect something noble and generous. Imagine that there is, in a certain portion of the world, a poor, suffering, oppressed orphan, forsaken by everybody; that the father of this orphan was my benefactor; that I swore to him to devote myself to his son; and that now the life of that son is in danger. Say, my children, should you be sorry to see me quit you to go to the assistance of this orphan?'"

"'Oh, no, no, dear father,' we replied; 'for then we should not be your daughters,'" said Rose, with excitement; "'go, and rely upon us. We should be too unhappy if we thought that our sorrow could weaken your courage — go at once! and each day we shall repeat with pride, it is to fulfil a noble and great duty that our father has left us, and, therefore, it is sweet to us to await him.'"

"How charming, how comforting, is the idea of duty, of devotion, sister dear!" responded Blanche. "Only see how that gives our father the courage to leave us without regret, and gives us the courage to await bravely his return."

"And then with what tranquillity we enjoy this hour! These afflicting dreams, which foretold such sad events, torment us now no longer."

"I told you so, sister, and now we shall be, for the future, quite happy."

"And are you like me? For I feel myself stronger, more courageous, and in a disposition to brave every possible disaster."

"So do I; so see how strong we have become! Our

father in the centre, you on one side, and I on the other, and — "

"Dagobert as advanced guard, Killjoy as rear-guard, and then the army will be complete."

"Then let a thousand squadrons come and attack us," added suddenly a deep and joyous voice, interrupting the young girls, and Dagobert appeared at the door of the room, which was ajar. Happy and merry, it was really pleasant to see him. The old fellow had heard a little of what was going on before he presented himself to the girls.

"Ah, Mister Inquisitive, you were listening!" said Rose, gaily, as she came out of the apartment with her sister, and entering the salon, they both kissed the soldier affectionately.

"Well, I must say I was listening, and I am only sorry for one thing, and that is, that I had not ears as large as Killjoy, that I might have heard more. Good, dear girls, how I love you! *Mordieu!* and saying to Dull Care, 'Half-step to the left — quick march, and be hanged to you!'"

"Very fine! You'll see he'll tell us to swear presently," said Rose to her sister, laughing heartily.

"Eh, *ma foi!* Well, perhaps, occasionally it might be so," replied the soldier, "it comforts, calms me so; for if, to enable us to sustain the attacks of wretchedness, we could not swear by the five hundred names of — "

"Will you be quiet!" said Rose, putting her pretty hand on the gray moustache of Dagobert to stop him; "if Madame Augustine heard you now — "

"Poor *gouvernante!* So gentle, so timid!" said Blanche.

"How you would frighten her!"

"Yes," said Dagobert, trying to conceal his growing embarrassment, "but she does not hear us, because she is gone into the country."

"Good, dear woman," observed Rose, "when speaking

to us of you, she made use of a word which was very touching, and displayed her excellent heart. She did, indeed, for she said, 'Ah, mesdemoiselles, compared with the affection of M. Dagobert, I know that my attachment is so recent that it must seem nothing to you, that you are in no need of it, and yet I feel I have a right to devote myself to you as he does.' "

"No doubt, no doubt, she has a worthy heart, a heart of gold," replied Dagobert; then he added, in a lower voice, "It would seem as if they turned the conversation on her purposely, poor woman!"

"Besides, my father made a most proper choice when he selected her," said Rose, "the widow of an old soldier, who was in the wars with him."

"At the time when we were so melancholy," said Blanche, "how uneasy and how anxious she was to comfort us!"

"Twenty times I have seen the big tears in her eyes, as she looked at us," remarked Rose. "Ah, she loves us tenderly, and we return her love. And with reference to this, Dagobert, do you know we have a little project when our father returns?"

"Hush, sister," said Blanche, laughing; "Dagobert will not keep the secret."

"Yes, he will, though. Won't you, Dagobert?"

"Why," said the soldier, whose embarrassment was now extreme, "you will do right, perhaps, to say nothing about it."

"You can't keep anything from Madame Augustine."

"Ah, M. Dagobert, M. Dagobert!" continued Blanche, gaily, and menacing the soldier with the end of her finger, "I suspect you very much of having flirted with our good *gouvernante!*"

"I — I — flirted?" said the soldier.

The tone, the expression of Dagobert, as he uttered these words, was so singular that the two sisters burst into loud laughter.

Their mirth was its height, when the door of the salon opened.

Jocrisse advanced several steps, and then, with a loud voice, announced:

"M. Rodin."

And at the moment the Jesuit glided swiftly into the apartment, as if to take possession of the ground; for once in, he believed his end was attained, and his reptile eyes glittered.

It would be difficult to paint the surprise of the two sisters and the anger of the soldier at this unexpected visit. Running to Jocrisse, Dagobert seized him by the collar, and exclaimed:

"Who gave you leave to introduce any one here without first asking me?"

"Forgive me, M. Dagobert," said Jocrisse, going on his knees, and clasping his hands with an air as stupid as it was supplicating.

"Be gone! Leave the house! And you also!" added the soldier, with a menacing air, and turning towards Rodin, who was already approaching the young girls with his hypocritical air.

"Will you go?" cried the soldier to Jocrisse, who was still on his knees, for owing to this position the man was able to utter a certain number of words.

"M. Dagobert," said Jocrisse, in a doleful voice, "pardon me for having introduced this gentleman here without giving you notice, but, alas! my head is all in a whirl in consequence of the misfortune that has happened to Madame Augustine."

"What misfortune?" exclaimed Rose and Blanche together, and going towards Dagobert with a gesture of uneasiness.

"Will you get out?" replied Dagobert, shaking Jocrisse by the collar, in order to compel him to rise.

"Speak, speak!" said Blanche, interposing between

the soldier and Jocrisse. "What has happened to Madame Augustine?"

"Mademoiselle," said Jocrisse, hastily, and in spite of the interference of the soldier, "Madame Augustine was attacked with cholera last night and they have —"

Jocrisse was unable to finish, for Dagobert gave him a blow with his fist in the jaw, such as he had not bestowed for a long time, and then exerting his strength, which was still considerable for his age, the old dragoon, with an iron grasp, lifted Jocrisse on his legs, and, with a violent kick in the seat of honour, sent him headlong into the chamber adjacent.

Then turning to Rodin, with his cheeks inflamed and his eye sparkling with rage, Dagobert pointed to the door with an expressive gesture, saying, in an angry voice:

"And now, sir, it's your turn; and if you do not go, and directly too, why —"

"Allow me to pay my respects, my dear sir," said Rodin, going backwards towards the door, and bowing to the young girls.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### DUTY.

Slowly retreating before the angry fire of Dagobert's glances, Rodin managed to gain the door by a sort of retrograde movement, while at the same time he sent out a kind of sidelong, penetrating look towards the orphans, who were visibly agitated by the well-concerted carelessness of Jocrisse, who, in spite of Dagobert's express prohibition not to mention before the sisters the calamity which had befallen their *gouvernante*, had thus daringly, and in defiance of his received order, presumed to act in direct contradiction to the wishes of his superiors. Hastily approaching the soldier, Rose exclaimed, "Is it, indeed, true that poor dear Madame Augustine has been attacked by cholera?"

"No, I do not know — I believe not," replied the soldier, with hesitation; "besides, what consequence is it to you?"

"Dagobert, you wish to conceal this sad affliction from us," said Blanche. "I remember now your embarrassment when you were speaking of our *gouvernante* a little time since."

"If she is ill, we ought not to forsake her; she was full of commiseration for our sorrows, and we ought to have pity on her sufferings."

"Come, sister, let us go to our chamber," said Blanche, advancing a step towards the door at which Rodin had paused, and was listening to this conversation with deep curiosity, at the same time reflecting very seriously.

"You shall not leave this room," said the soldier, in a decided tone, to the two sisters.

"Dagobert," replied Rose, with firmness, "a sacred duty is in question, and it would be cowardice to shrink from it."

"I tell you that you shall not go out!" replied the soldier, stamping his foot with impatience.

"My good friend," observed Blanche, with an air as resolute as her sister's, and with an excitement that tinted her lovely cheek with a rosy hue, "our father, in quitting us, has given us an admirable example of devotion to duty, and he will not excuse us if we forget his lesson."

"What!" exclaimed Dagobert, greatly excited, and going towards the two sisters to prevent them from leaving the room, "do you think that if your *gouvernante* had the cholera, I would allow you to go to her under the pretext of duty? Your duty is to live, and live happy, for your father's sake, and for my sake into the bargain; so not another word of this mad scheme."

"We do not run any danger in going to our *gouvernante* in her chamber," said Rose.

"And if there were any danger," added Blanche, "we ought not to hesitate; so, Dagobert, be good, and let us pass."

Suddenly Rodin, who had been watching this scene with deep attention and meditation, started, his eye sparkled, and a ray of malicious delight lighted up his visage.

"Dagobert, do not refuse us," said Blanche; "you would do for us what you reproach us for desiring to do to another."

Dagobert had up to this moment impeded the passage of the Jesuit and the two sisters, by putting himself before the door; after a moment's reflection he shrugged his shoulders, moved on one side, and said, calmly:

"I was an old fool. Well, young ladies, go. If you

find Madame Augustine in the house, I permit you to remain with her."

Surprised at the confident manner and the words of Dagobert, the two young ladies remained motionless and undecided.

"If our *gouvernante* is not here, where is she, then?" asked Rose.

"Do you imagine that I will tell you in your present state of excitement?"

"She is dead!" cried Rose, turning pale.

"No, no — calm yourself," said the soldier, quickly. "No, by your father I swear no; only at the first attack of the malady she desired to be carried out of the house, fearing that those in the house might catch the contagion."

"Good, courageous woman!" said Rose, much affected; "and you would not —"

"I would not allow you to leave this house; nor shall you, if I have to lock you up in your chamber!" exclaimed the soldier, stamping his foot angrily; then recollecting that the babbling indiscretion of Jocrisse had caused this lamentable chagrin, he added, with great anger, "Oh, I'll break my cane over that scoundrel's back!"

So saying he turned towards the door, where Rodin still remained silent and attentive, concealing beneath his usual impassiveness the dark designs which he had conceived.

The two young girls, no longer in doubt as to the departure of their *gouvernante*, and persuaded that Dagobert would not inform them whither they had conveyed her, remained pensive and melancholy.

At the sight of the priest, whom he had for an instant forgotten, the old soldier's rage increased, and he said to him, savagely:

"What, are you still here?"

"Allow me to remark to you, my dear sir," replied

Rodin, with that air of ease and kindness which he so well knew how to assume on an occasion, "that you kept before the door, which naturally prevented my leaving the apartment."

"Well, now then, nothing hinders you, so go — be off!"

"I will be off with all possible haste, my dear sir, although I think I have a right to express my astonishment at such a reception."

"We are not talking of reception, but departure, — so go."

"I came, my dear sir, to talk with you."

"I have no time for talking."

"It is on a very serious subject!"

"I have no serious subject, but that of remaining with these children."

"Very well, my dear sir," said Rodin, from the threshold: "I will no longer importune you. Excuse my intrusion, but as the bearer of news — excellent news, from the Maréchal Simon, I came —"

"News of my father!" said Rose, quickly; and going towards Rodin, "Oh, tell us, sir, tell us, and quickly!"

"You have news of the maréchal! You?" said Dagobert, casting a suspicious glance at Rodin; "and what is your news, then?"

But Rodin, without immediately replying to this question, advanced from the threshold of the door, and returned to the salon, looking first at Rose, and then at Blanche, with admiration. Then he said:

"What pleasure it is to me to come and bring some good tidings to these dear young ladies! I see them as I left them, always graceful and charming, although not so sad as the day when I brought them from that wretched convent where they were kept prisoners. With what delight did I see them cast themselves into the arms of their valiant and valued father!"

"That was their place; but yours is not here," said

Dagobert, rudely, and holding the door open at Rodin's back.

"Confess, at least, that I was in my place at Doctor Baleinier's," said the Jesuit, looking at the soldier with a crafty smile; "you know, in that lunatic asylum, — the day on which I restored to you that noble imperial cross, which you so deeply regretted; the day when that excellent young lady, Mlle. de Cardoville, by saying that I was her liberator, prevented you from strangling me — a trifle, my dear sir. Yes, indeed, really, young ladies, as I have the honour to tell you," added Rodin, with a smile, "this brave soldier was about to strangle me; for it must be owned that, in spite of his age, and with no desire to offend him, he has an iron gripe. Eh, eh, eh! The Prussians and Cossacks ought to know that better than myself."

These few words reminded Dagobert and the young girls of the services which Rodin had really rendered them. Although the maréchal had heard Mlle. de Cardoville speak of Rodin as a very dangerous person, whose dupe she had been, the father of Rose and Blanche, incessantly worried and tormented, had not mentioned this fact to Dagobert; but the old grenadier, instructed by experience, and despite the many appearances favourable to the Jesuit, felt an irresistible repugnance for him, and replied, harshly:

"It is no consequence whether my gripe is strong or not, but — "

"If I allude to your harmless vivacity on that occasion, my dear sir," said Rodin, in a soft tone, and interrupting Dagobert, whilst he advanced still nearer to the two sisters by that kind of creeping, reptile step which was peculiar to him, "if I alluded to it, it was from recalling, involuntarily, the trifling services which I was but too happy to render to you."

Dagobert looked fixedly at Rodin, who instantly dropped his flaccid lid on his repulsive eye.

"In the first place," said the soldier, after a moment's silence, "a right-hearted man never refers to services he has rendered, yet you have done so already three times."

"But, Dagobert," said Rose, in a low tone, "if he has news of our dear father?"

The soldier motioned with his hand, as if to beg the young girl to allow him to speak, and then continued, keeping his eye steadily fixed on Rodin:

"You are a knave, and I am not a raw recruit."

"I a knave?" said Rodin, with a stolid air.

"Decidedly! You think to come over me with your fine phrases; but it won't do, old gentleman. Listen to what I say. One of your black-gown gang stole my cross; you restored it to me — well! Some one of your black-gown gang carried off these children; you found them — well! You denounced the renegade, D'Aigrigny — true. But all this only proves two things: the first, that you were rogue enough to be the accomplice of such vagabonds; the second, that you were rogue enough to denounce them; and these two acts are both infamous, and I suspect you. So now go — begone! — the sight of you is not wholesome for these children."

"But, my dear sir —"

"There is no 'but' in the question," cried Dagobert, in an angry tone. "I tell you what, when one of your sort of men pretends to perform a good action, it is time to be on one's guard, because it is quite sure some mischief is intended, and therefore, don't you see, I suspect you! So be off!"

"Certainly," replied Rodin, coldly, and choking down his extreme annoyance and disappointment, for he had reckoned on easily managing the soldier. "I admit that you have a right to form your own opinion as to my views and motives; but still, if you only reflect for an instant, what interest can I have in deceiving you? Of if even the desire existed, what means have I of indulging it?"

"I neither know nor care; but this I am very sure of, that you mean to drive me to do something desperate to you, by insisting upon remaining here, whether I will or no."

"Well, well, my dear sir, I have had the honour to state the purpose of my coming, therefore —"

"You bring tidings of Maréchal Simon, I think you say?"

"Precisely so! I am fortunate enough to have very pleasing and gratifying intelligence concerning M. le Maréchal," replied Rodin, again approaching the sisters, as though to regain the ground he had lost, and addressing himself to them, he said, "Yes, my dear young ladies, I bring you news of your brave and noble father."

"Then come with me directly," cried Dagobert; "you can tell me all you have heard or know in my own room."

"How? — deprive these dear young ladies of the happiness of hearing news which — but no, no; you cannot be so cruel or indifferent to their feelings."

"Bombs and cannons!" thundered forth Dagobert, pale with rage; "have you not sense enough to see that I shrink from turning an old man like you out of the room? But, by the powers above us, my patience will be exhausted in a minute, and, if you do not take yourself away quickly, I shall be obliged to drop you from the top to the bottom of the staircase."

"Come, come!" replied Rodin, mildly; "don't put yourself into a passion with a poor old fellow like myself; I am not worth it. No, no, be calm; let us go into your room, as you say. I will tell you what I have to communicate, and then, you sad, naughty, passionate man, you will be vexed and sorry that you hindered these poor dear children from sharing in the pleasure of hearing such good news; and that shall be your punishment. Mind, I tell you all the punishment I shall inflict or desire for you."

So saying, and with another low bow, Rodin, who could scarcely restrain his rage and disappointment, passed by Dagobert, who shut the door after him, and made a signal of intelligence to the two sisters to remain there till his return.

"Well, Dagobert, what news of our dear father?" inquired Rose, eagerly, of the soldier, as a quarter of an hour after his quitting the room with Rodin he returned to the anxiously expecting sisters.

"Oh, merely nothing more than that the old wiseacre had contrived to find out that your father was gone and in excellent spirits. He is also acquainted with M. Robert. How or in what manner he learned all this, is more than I know," added the soldier, with a thoughtful, meditative air; "but it is an additional reason for being on my guard against him, and mistrusting all he says or does."

"And what were the tidings he brought of our father?" inquired Rose.

"A friend of this vile deceiver (for I know and feel certain he is one), who, he says, knows your father, met him about five and twenty leagues from hence; and if that be the case, 'tis just possible the maréchal might have charged him, upon reaching Paris, either to see you himself or send some person to you to let you know that he had proceeded thus far safely, was in health, and trusted soon to see you again."

"Oh, what happiness!" exclaimed Rose.

"Ah, now, Dagobert," cried Blanche, "you see how wrong you were to suspect the poor old man. How could you behave so rudely to him?"

"I don't repent of the reception I gave him, I can tell you."

"Oh, don't you? What, not now, Dagobert?"

"No, I don't. I have my reasons, and the best and strongest is, that when I saw him come in just now, and

begin twirling and twisting to get at you, I felt a sort of cold chill strike to the very marrow of my bones, without being able to account for it. If I had perceived a serpent crawling towards you, and striving to throw its deadly coil around you, I could not have shuddered with a more mortal dread. I know very well that he can do you no harm in my presence; but I know not how it is, my children, I tell you candidly that, after all the services he has rendered us, I had the greatest difficulty in the world to prevent myself from throwing him out of the window. Now this is such a very unnatural mode of proving one's gratitude that I feel sure and certain there must be something dangerous about people capable of inspiring such a feeling of aversion instead of regard."

"Dear, good Dagobert!" said Rose, in a caressing tone, "'tis the excess of your affection for us that renders you so suspicious; and your very mistrust shows your love for us!"

"Ah, yes," added Blanche, fondly patting the shoulder of the old soldier; "you do love your two children, very, very dearly, don't you now, Dagobert?" and both sisters fixed their innocent looks upon the old man, as though they were about to effect some purpose arranged beforehand.

This was, however, one of Dagobert's suspicious days. So, after wistfully gazing from one lovely face to the other, the old soldier shook his head and replied:

"Come, come, young ladies, all this coaxing is not for nothing; you have got some favour to ask of me, I know you have; so let's have it. I'll have no beating about the bush."

"Well, dear Dagobert," said Rose, "you know we always tell the truth."

"Oh, yes, Dagobert!" chimed in Blanche, "we only want a very little trifle; nothing but what is quite reasonable, and that you could grant quite easily, if you only would!"

So saying, each sister approached the soldier, who was still standing, and resting her clasped hands on his shoulder, looked at him with a most insinuating smile.

"Now, then," said Dagobert, looking alternately from side to side, "all I have to do is to keep my ground. Here is some rather difficult affair to bring out. Oh, don't shake your heads, — I am sure of it!"

"Oh, Dagobert, do pray listen patiently and indulgently to the little, tiny favour we are going to ask; you who have so often praised us for possessing the courage and resolution becoming the daughters of a brave soldier!"

"To the point, to the point!" said Dagobert, who began to feel somewhat uneasy at all these oratorical preliminaries.

Just as the sisters were about to speak, a gentle knock was heard at the door. (The lesson Dagobert had bestowed upon Jocrisse had been of the most wholesome description, it having consisted in his immediate dismissal from the house.)

"Who is there?" inquired Dagobert.

"'Tis I — Justin, M. Dagobert," replied a voice.

"Come in."

A servant belonging to the household, moreover a faithful, honest fellow, appeared at the door.

"What do you want?" inquired the soldier.

"M. Dagobert," replied Justin, "there is a lady below in a carriage, who has sent her footman to inquire whether she can speak to M. le Duc or the young ladies. She has been informed of M. le Duc's absence, but mesdemoiselles were at home; upon which she begged to be allowed to see them, saying that her business was to collect alms for a charitable purpose."

"Did you see the lady? Do you know her name?"

"I did, not think of inquiring, M. Dagobert but she has quite the looks of a great personage; her carriage is magnificent, and the servants wear rich liveries."

"This lady has come to collect money for a charitable purpose!" said Rose to Dagobert; "no doubt to aid some benevolent design; and since she has been told that we are at home, it does not seem to me that we can refuse to see her."

"What do you think, Dagobert?" inquired Blanche.

"Why," answered the old soldier, "I don't see myself what harm a lady can do; it is not like that old plotter of mischief I just now got rid of; besides, I shall not leave you." Then, addressing Justin, he said, "Show the lady up-stairs."

The man departed.

"Why, now, Dagobert, I really do believe you suspect something about this lady whom you do not even know!"

"Ah, my children, what cause had I for mistrusting my own good and worthy wife? but still, she it was who gave you into the power of those priests, and that, too, without even thinking that she did wrong, but solely in obedience to her scoundrelly confessor."

"Poor Madame Françoise! 'tis quite true, Dagobert; and yet I am sure she loved us as tenderly as if we had been her own children!" said Rose, mournfully.

"When did you hear of her?" asked Blanche.

"The day before yesterday. She is fast recovering; the air of the small village in which is situated Gabriel's curacy suits her admirably, and while he is away she is keeping his house."

At this moment the two folding doors of the salon were thrown open, and the Princesse de Saint-Dizier entered with a respectful and graceful curtsey, holding in her hand one of those scarlet velvet purses employed in Catholic churches in collecting charitable contributions.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE COLLECTION.

We have already observed that the Princesse de Saint-Dizier could, upon occasion, assume the most captivating manners and winning appearance; having, moreover, preserved all her youthful powers of fascination, she knew how and when to put on the irresistible coquetries of her earlier days; and more than once had she called to her aid the insinuating smile, the dulcet voice, which had subdued so many hearts, to further her present schemes of fanatical bigotry and aggrandisement. And so artfully did Madame de Saint-Dizier unite the grace and dignity of the high-bred woman with the soft simplicity of a warm-hearted, unpretending individual, that in no one instance did the victim she sought to entrap escape her seducing assumption of character.

Such was the Princesse de Saint-Dizier as she presented herself before the daughters of Maréchal Simon and Dagobert. She was admirably dressed in a robe of gray watered silk, which concealed the somewhat superabundant embonpoint of her figure. She wore a becoming small black velvet hat, and a profusion of light curls shaded her still handsome countenance, while the insinuating smile, which played upon her lips and bestowed a look of amenity and benevolence to her features, displayed her white and even teeth.

Spite of the habitual timidity of the sisters, they, as well as Dagobert, found themselves unable to withstand the charm of look and manner in their visitor, who,

advancing towards Rose and Blanche, gracefully curtsied, and said, in a tone of honeyed softness:

"Have I the honour to speak to the Mlles. de Ligny?"

But little accustomed to have themselves addressed by their father's honoured title, the sisters gazed at each other in silent embarrassment, which was at length relieved by Dagobert, who, perceiving their hesitation, took upon himself to reply to the interrogatory by saying:

"These young ladies, madame, are the daughters of Maréchal Simon, but they are seldom called by any other name than that of Simon."

"Ah!" cried Madame de Saint-Dizier, "such amiable modesty well becomes these pretty young girls, and well accords with what I have heard of them. Let me hope, however, they will pardon me for addressing them by a name which recalls one of the most brilliant victories achieved by their brave father."

At these flattering and conciliatory words, Rose and Blanche cast a grateful look towards Madame de Saint-Dizier, while even Dagobert, gratified and proud of praises addressed equally to the marèchal and his daughters, felt his confidence in their visitor rapidly increase.

Still speaking in her winningly soft and well modulated voice, the princess continued:

"I come to you, my young friends, in full confidence that you who have had the opportunity of witnessing the continued exercise of charity and every noble virtue, on the part of your father, will bestow your aid in behalf of those unfortunate beings stricken with that awfully dreadful disease, the cholera. I myself am one of the patronesses of an institution for that purpose, and whatever assistance you may think proper to bestow, I can only assure you it will be most thankfully received."

"'Tis we who should thank you, madame," replied Blanche, with graceful eagerness, "for having deigned to associate us in your good work."

"Allow me," said Rose, "to fetch all we have it in our power to offer, and to present it with the sincerest wishes that our mite may be serviceable."

Then exchanging a look with her sister, Rose quitted the apartment and entered the adjoining chamber, which formed their bedroom.

"Be seated, madame, if you please," said Dagobert, more and more charmed by the words and manners of the princess. "Pray take a chair while Rose is gone to fetch her money-bag."

Then, after the princess had sat down on the seat offered her by the old soldier, he hastily added:

"You must excuse my making so free as to call one of the daughters of Maréchal Simon by her name, just as if she were my own child; but you see, madame, I was with their blessed mother when they were born, and they seem as natural to me as if they were my own children."

"And, indeed, madame," continued Blanche, "next to our dear father, there is nobody we love and respect so much as our dear, good Dagobert, who is the best, the tenderest, and most devoted friend we possess."

"I can well believe all you say, my dear young friend," replied the artful woman, "for well do you and your charming sister appear calculated to inspire an attachment and devotion such as I am persuaded your worthy guardian here feels for you." Then turning towards Dagobert, the princess added, with one of her most winning smiles, "A devotion as honourable to those who inspire it as those who experience it."

"True, madame, quite true," said Dagobert; "I feel that I am every way honoured and flattered by being permitted to devote all my poor energies to the welfare and preservation of the noble maréchal's dear children. But here comes Rose with her little hoard."

As he spoke, the being he named appeared at the entrance of the apartment bearing a small but well-filled

purse, made of green silk. This she presented to the princess, who had already watched the entrance door with the impatience of a person who expects the coming of an individual who appears not according to promise. This movement, however, escaped the notice of Dagobert.

"We are very sorry, madame," said Rose, "that we cannot make a better offering to your charitable institution, but, in truth, all the money we possess in the world is in that purse."

"Gold!" exclaimed the visitor, as she perceived a number of louis glitter through the meshes of the purse; "let me assure you, young ladies, that what you are pleased to style a humble offering has not its fellow amid the rich and great." Then, bestowing on the sisters one of her most insinuating glances, the princess added, "This sum was doubtless devoted to affording some fresh pleasure, amusement, or an additional ornament for your toilet, the merit of the gift becomes therefore the greater. I see plainly I had not too highly estimated the goodness and generosity of your natures; but when I see you thus voluntarily impose on yourselves privations ordinarily so painful to young persons of your age—"

"Oh, no, madame!" interrupted Rose; "pray let me assure you that the trifle we are enabled to offer is no sacrifice on the part of either my sister or myself."

"And I believe you," replied the princess, with a smile of winning sweetness; "loveliness such as it has pleased nature to endow you with may well feel indifferent as to the artificial aid of the most studied toilet, while minds generous and noble as yours would naturally prefer the delights of benevolence to every mean and earthly enjoyment."

"Madame!"

"Come, come, young ladies," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, smiling, and assuming her motherly air, "don't

let my commendation embarrass you. At my age, flattery avails but little, and what I say to you is meant as though speaking to my own daughters, for you may suppose I am quite old enough to be your mother, nay, your grandmother, even."

"And, indeed, madame," said Rose, "you may quite believe that it would render my sister and myself so pleased and proud to think our trifling assistance had enabled you to relieve any of the unfortunate beings in whose behalf you are so charitably exerting yourself, for I make no doubt you frequently meet with most painful and distressing cases."

"True, my dear young lady," answered the pretended charitable visitant; "we do, indeed, meet the most harrowing facts as connected with the objects of our sympathy; but then again we are consoled and comforted by observing the deep interest which all classes of society take in their misfortunes, as well as the pity so spontaneously and generously bestowed; and I can assure you that, in my office of collector of charitable donations, I have a better chance than others of appreciating the noble devotion I meet with, as well as the promptitude to rush to the aid of their suffering fellow creatures. Indeed, I may venture to assert that, so contagious is benevolence that —"

"There, young ladies!" exclaimed Dagobert, triumphantly interrupting the princess, in the excess of his desire to construe the last-spoken words as favourable to the opposition he had evinced to the sisters' desire of visiting their sick *gouvernante;* "now are you convinced after this good lady has spoken so sensibly? You hear her say that in some cases devotion becomes contagious. Now, nothing is more to be dreaded and avoided than contagion, and for that reason —"

Here the soldier was interrupted by the entrance of a servant to announce that a person was waiting to see him.

The princess veiled her satisfaction at this little hindrance to the old man's train of reasoning under an air of the most natural indifference and unconcern, although the fact of Dagobert's being called away had been arranged previously to her own coming, and anxiously expected by her for some time, as affording her the opportunity of working out her errand during the temporary absence of the old soldier from the young creatures he so tenderly and sedulously guarded. While Dagobert, much annoyed at being obliged to quit the room, said to the princess, with a look of intelligence:

"Pray, madame, let me thank you for your excellent remarks touching the contagion attendant upon overzeal and devotion. I should also esteem it a favour if, ere you go, you would first say a little more on the same subject; by repeating your former observations to these young ladies, you will render them a great service, as well as infinitely oblige their father and myself. I am compelled to leave you for a short time, madame, but I shall quickly return, for I would thank you again and again for setting the minds of these dear children at rest on a subject we do not happen to agree upon." Then going close up to the sisters, Dagobert whispered, "You cannot do better, my children, than listen to this excellent lady." Then bowing low and respectfully to the princess, he quitted the room.

Directly the door had closed on the old soldier, the feigned visitant, although impatient to profit by the absence of Dagobert to carry out the instructions she had just received from Rodin, said, in the calmest voice, and most natural, unembarrassed manner:

"I did not quite comprehend the last words of your old friend, or rather he, I think, misunderstood mine. When I spoke to you but now of the generous contagion of feeling, I was very far from intending to blame that feeling, for which, on the contrary, I experience the greatest possible admiration."

"Oh, yes, madame," responded Rose, quickly, "I am sure you do, and it was so we understood you to mean."

"And if you only knew, madame," added Blanche, exchanging a significant glance with her sister, "how exactly your words apply to our own position at this precise moment."

"I was quite certain of being well understood by such hearts as yours," resumed the charitable visitant; "doubtless devotion is contagious, but then it is the cant again of generosity and heroism. You can scarcely credit the noble and affecting instances I daily witness; how I am hourly struck by the most touching and affecting acts of courageous tenderness, of noble devotion. But so it is," continued Madame de Saint-Dizier, piously rolling her eyes, "and let all praise and glory be, as justly due, given to the Lord above, who deigns to rule and direct the hearts of his weak and erring family here on earth; but bless God it is as it is, and that I am enabled, my dear young ladies, with truth to say that all ranks and conditions vie with each other in deeds of purest Christian charity. If you could but see, even in the temporary hospitals established for the purpose of bestowing the earliest succours on such as are stricken by contagion, what emulation, what eager devotion and disregard of self prevails! Poor and rich, young and old, females of all ages, flock around the unfortunate beings who are the objects of our care, and esteem themselves but too happy in being permitted to watch by their sick pillow, or, if needs must be, whisper words of soft consolation to such as are encompassed within the black shadow of death."

"You see, dear Blanche," said Rose, addressing her sister, "that it is for persons to whom they are utterly unknown that so many noble-minded persons so unhesitatingly risk their lives."

"Most assuredly it is," replied the pious visitant. "Only yesterday I was moved even to tears while visit-

ing a temporary hospital established not far from your abode, nay, I may say close to your house. One large chamber was filled with a number of poor destitute creatures, brought there almost in a dying state. All at once I saw a lady, a friend of mine, enter, accompanied by her two daughters, as young, as charming, and as charitably disposed as yourselves. Without a moment's delay or hesitation, the three placed themselves at the service of the medical attendants, received their directions, and waited upon the unfortunate patients with a zeal and tenderness not to be surpassed by the most lowly worshippers of our most blessed religion."

The sisters exchanged a look of indescribable earnestness and deep fervour as they listened to words so calculated to excite their enthusiastic minds, and fan into a flame the heroic sentiments of their generous natures. Their sudden alarm and evident emotion, upon learning the malady with which their *gouvernante* had been attacked, were not lost upon Rodin, whose quick penetration had at once perceived the important use to which this incident might be turned, and upon this hint Madame de Saint-Dizier had been duly instructed to act.

Continuing, therefore, to regard the orphans with a closely observant eye, in order to discover the effect of her words, the charitable messenger said:

"You may feel quite sure that foremost in the ranks of those bent upon this mission of charity are to be found the ministers of our holy religion. This very morning, while visiting the benevolent establishment I mentioned to you as being situated in your immediate neighbourhood, I was struck, in common with all present, at the sight of a young priest, or rather some angelic being descended from on high to afford the poor suffering females collected within its walls the comforts of religion. But he must have been more than human, I am sure; and if you could only have seen the Abbé Gabriel

under the trying and distressing circumstances I did, you would, like me — "

"Gabriel, the Abbé Gabriel!" exclaimed the sisters, as they exchanged looks of joyful surprise.

"Do you know him?" inquired the feigned philanthropist, with apparent astonishment.

"Well do we know him, dear madame, as the preserver of our lives."

"Yes, indeed, during a fearful storm at sea, when the vessel was utterly wrecked, and we should have perished but for him."

"Is it possible?" cried Madame de Saint-Dizier, affecting still greater amazement; "but are you quite sure we mean the same person?"

"Oh, no, madame; we cannot possibly be mistaken. You describe a being precisely resembling our Gabriel, — all courage, and the most heavenly forgetfulness of self!"

"And, besides," added Rose, with innocent warmth, "it is impossible to mistake our Gabriel, for he is as beautiful as the archangel whose name he bears!"

"With such long, light curling hair!" cried Blanche.

"And eyes of blue so soft and tender," continued Rose, "that it is impossible to look at him without being touched to the heart!"

"Oh, then it must be he!" replied the visitant; "and you can fully conceive the almost adoration he excites, and the almost incredible ardour and zealous charity created by his noble and saint-like example. How I wish you could have heard him this morning! With what tender emotion he praised the conduct of those noble-minded women who generously risked contagion itself to succour and console their sisters in trouble and mortal sickness! Alas! although I well know that the Almighty has enjoined lowliness and humility to his followers, I am obliged to confess that, as I listened to the Abbé Gabriel this morning, I could not prevent myself, all unworthy as I was, from being moved by a sort of holy

pride as I ventured to take my poor share in the praises so beautifully expressed. More especially when he said, with so touching a look and voice, 'That he seemed to recognise a dearly loved sister in those kind and devoted beings who thus ventured to kneel beside the sick-bed of such as all else had, perhaps, forsaken, that they might arrest the parting breath, or whisper peace to the departing soul!'"

"Sister!" cried Blanche to Rose, "do you hear those words? Oh, how happy ought those to be who have deserved such commendations!"

"Yes, happy, indeed!" exclaimed the princess, with well-assumed enthusiasm; "well may we indulge in such a pride as that occasioned by those holy praises, which seem as though uttered by the inspiration of God himself."

"Madame," said Rose, whose cheeks were flushed, and whose heart beat with the excitement created by the words of the affected devotee, "we have lost our mother, and our other parent is absent, but I feel assured that we can nowhere seek a friend more capable of advising us than yourself, whose heart is as noble as your disposition is kind and feeling."

"What advice do you require, my dear child?" asked Madame de Saint-Dizier, in her most insinuating tone and manner; "let me say my dear child, since the difference between our ages well warrants its application."

"Indeed, madame," interrupted Blanche, "we shall be delighted if you will call us both your children." Then, after slightly hesitating, she continued, "My sister wishes to ask your opinion on a subject we would fain know our duty upon."

"We had a kind and faithful friend, who lived with us as our instructress and companion; unhappily during the past night she has been seized with the cholera."

"How very dreadful!" exclaimed the devotee, feigning the utmost sympathy. "And how is she now?"

"Alas, madame, we do not know!"

"Not know? Why, is it possible you have not been to see her?"

"Pray do not accuse us of either indifference or ingratitude," said Blanche, mournfully; "indeed, madame, it is not our fault that we are not at this minute beside our suffering friend."

"And who prevents your going to her?"

"Dagobert; that dear, kind old man you saw here when you first came in."

"And wherefore should he object to your performing an act of positive duty, as well as gratitude, to your faithful guide and preceptress?"

"You consider, then, dear madame, that it is our duty to visit our sick friend, do you not?"

Instead of immediately replying to this direct appeal, Madame de Saint-Dizier continued to gaze from one sister to the other, as though bewildered with amazement; at last she said:

"Is it possible that young persons apparently so right-minded, and richly endowed with every fine quality of the soul, can ask me such a question?"

"I assure you, madame, that our first impulse was to hasten to our poor *gouvernante;* but then, Dagobert, whose excessive love for us makes him apprehensive of almost everything, feared there might be some risk, and so forbade our going."

"Besides," added Rose, "when our dear father quitted us, he placed us absolutely under Dagobert's charge, so that the recollection of his entire responsibility, joined to his tender solicitude for us, makes our worthy Dagobert think more than is needful of the danger we should incur in visiting our poor sick preceptress."

"Certainly," replied the devotee, "the scruples of your excellent friend are quite natural, as well as excusable; but his fears are, as you justly observe, wholly unfounded. For some time past I, as well as many of my friends, have

been in the daily habit of visiting these temporary hospitals, yet neither they nor myself have experienced the smallest ill effect. Besides, the cholera is now proved beyond a doubt to be without contagion, so that you may make yourselves quite easy as regards the absence of all danger in paying a visit to your suffering friend."

"Whether there be danger or no, madame," said Rose, "it is enough for us to be told that duty summons us to the sick-bed of our *gouvernante*."

"I doubt it not, my dear young friends; and, indeed, your sick friend might well accuse you of ingratitude, or even cowardice, in abstaining from visiting her. But," continued Madame de Saint-Dizier, with well-assumed fervour, "it is not alone of earthly opinion we should stand in awe, we must seek to deserve and obtain the pardon of the Lord from whom proceed these awful manifestations of wrath, as well as his favour and protection for ourselves and those belonging to us. You have had the misfortune to lose your mother, I believe?"

"Alas, yes, madame!"

"Well, my dear young friends, then let us console ourselves with the assurance of her being among the number of the elect in heaven; for of course," added the princess, as though thinking aloud, "your dear parent died a Christian death, and on her death-bed received the last sacraments of our holy Mother Church?"

"We were living in the very wilds of Siberia at the time we lost her," said Rose, sorrowfully, "and she died of cholera. Besides which, madame, there was no priest at all near enough to our abode to have been able to attend her last moments, if even she had wished it."

"Gracious heavens!" almost shrieked the princess, with an alarmed and agitated manner; "then your poor mother expired without the aid or consolations of a minister of our blessed religion?"

"My sister and myself watched beside her after we had buried her in the grave dug for her by Dagobert," said

Rose, while her eyes filled with tears, "and we all prayed to God to take her into heaven, as well at least as we knew how to pray."

"My poor dear children!" cried the devotee, in a voice expressive of the deepest affliction.

"What ails you, madame?" asked the orphans, much startled at this sudden emotion.

"Alas, my poor girls! spite of the many virtues which adorned your excellent mother, I grieve to tell you that she has not yet been received into heaven."

"What mean you, madame?"

"Having, unhappily, died without the last sacraments having been administered, her soul is condemned to wander in purgatory until the day of the Lord's mercy, although her deliverance may be considerably hastened by means of the prayers which the church says daily for the redemption of souls from purgatory."

Madame de Saint-Dizier assumed an air so melancholy and full of mournful conviction, as she pronounced these words, that the poor girls, whose hearts were imbued with the deepest and truest filial affection, readily believed the princess's alarms for their mother's eternal repose were sincere; and with ingenuous sorrow bewailed their having been hitherto kept in ignorance of the horrors of purgatory.

The devotee, perceiving by the unfeigned grief and distress depicted on the countenances of the sisters that her infamous deception had worked the desired effect, added, in a soothing tone, "You must not allow yourselves to despair, my children; the Lord will, sooner or later, receive your mother into the joys of paradise. But are there no means by which the deliverance of her precious soul can be accelerated through your endeavours?"

"Oh, tell us if there be, dear madame, we implore you!" cried the weeping girls; "we can think of nothing but to pray God, night and day, to pardon

our dear mother for dying without a priest, and to receive her into heaven. If there be aught else, we beseech you to direct us what we can do."

"Poor children, how much they interest me!" said the princess, with pretended emotion, as she pressed a hand of each within her own. "Take comfort, I say again," resumed she. "You can do much for your mother's repose; and, in preference to every other intercessor, you may obtain the Lord's favour for her, whereby her soul may be delivered from purgatory, and admitted into the realms of everlasting felicity."

"But tell us what we must do, dear madame, to obtain this great, this inestimable blessing!" exclaimed both sisters at once.

"By deserving the mercy of the Lord by your praiseworthy and edifying conduct; and in no manner can you render yourselves more acceptable in his sight than by discharging your debt of duty and gratitude to your poor *gouvernante;* and I feel quite assured that so striking a proof of Christian zeal, as the Abbé Gabriel would call it, would be most efficaciously counted equal to the release of your mother's spirit from the pains of purgatory; for, in his infinite mercy, the Almighty ever lends a favourable ear to daughters interceding for their mother, and who, to obtain that prayer, offer to Heaven some great or holy action."

"Ah," exclaimed Blanche, "it is not alone of our sick *gouvernante* we have to think."

"Here comes Dagobert!" said Rose, hastily, as she listened to the ascending steps of the soldier, as he heavily mounted the staircase.

"Recover yourselves! Be calm! Say not a word of this to your worthy friend when he enters," said the princess, hastily; "he would be unnecessarily uneasy, and, foreboding dangers where none existed, would in all probability place obstacles in the way of your generous resolution."

"But how shall we be able to discover whither our *gouvernante* has been conveyed?" inquired Rose.

"Oh, we shall find that out, I doubt not. Rely upon me," whispered the false adviser; "I will see you again very shortly, when we will devise our plot, — our plot to obtain the speedy deliverance of your poor mother from the miseries she now endures."

Scarcely had Madame de Saint-Dizier pronounced these last words, with every appearance of the tenderest solicitude, than the old soldier entered the room, his countenance beaming with joy and content; indeed so delighted did he seem with the subject of his thoughts that he failed to observe the agitation the sisters could not immediately subdue.

Anxious to divert the attention of the old soldier, the princess arose, and, proceeding towards him, said, "I would not take my leave of these young ladies without expressing to you the high opinion I entertain of the great qualifications and amiable dispositions with which the Almighty has endowed them."

"I am not the less pleased, madame, to find such is your opinion, that it happens precisely to agree with my own. Let me hope that you have lectured the little headstrong things well, and explained clearly to them all about the contagion of devotion."

"Make yourself perfectly easy, my good sir," said the devotee, exchanging a look of intelligence with the sisters; "I have said all that was needful on the subject, and we now understand each other thoroughly!"

These words effectually satisfied Dagobert; and Madame de Saint-Dizier, after having taken an affectionate leave of the orphans, returned to her carriage, and proceeded to rejoin Rodin, who was waiting for her in a fiacre a little way off, in order to learn the result of her interview with her destined victims.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE TEMPORARY HOSPITAL.

Amongst a great number of temporary hospitals opened at the period of the cholera in all the quarters of Paris, there was one very extensive in a vast ground floor of a house in the Rue du Mont Blanc. This apartment, empty at the time, had been generously placed by the proprietor at the disposition of the authorities. To this place they conveyed indigent patients, who, suddenly attacked by contagion, were considered in too alarming a state to be immediately conveyed to the hospitals. It must be said, to the praise of the Parisian population, not only voluntary gifts of every kind were forwarded to these branch establishments, but persons of every condition, of rank, in humble life, artisans, artists, gave their services, night and day, in order to establish regularity, to exercise an active superintendence in these extra hospitals, and to come to the assistance of the medical men, that they might enforce their prescriptions with respect to the cholera patients.

Females of every class shared in this generous contention to be of service to their fellow creatures in affliction; and if nothing were to be so much respected as the susceptibilities of modesty, we should quote, amongst a thousand instances, that of two young and charming women, one of whom belonged to the aristocracy and the other to the upper classes of the citizens, who for four or five days, during which the epidemic raged with the utmost violence, came every morning to share with the

admirable Sisters of Charity the perilous and humble cares which they bestowed on the indigent sick who were brought to one of the temporary hospitals of a certain quarter of Paris.

These traits of brotherly charity, and many others which have taken place in our time, show how vain and interested are the impudent pretensions of certain of the ultramontane party. To hear them, it would seem as if they and their monks only, by virtue of their being wholly detached from all terrestrial affairs, are capable of giving to the world those wonderful examples of self-denial and of ardent charity which are the pride of humanity. To hear him, it would seem as if there were in society nothing comparable to the courage and devotion of the priest who goes to administer to a dying fellow creature. Nothing is more admirable than the Trappist who (if we are to believe them) pushes his evangelical self-denial so far as to break up and cultivate the land belonging to his Order! Is not this ethereal? Is it not divine? To till, sow the earth, whose results are for ourselves! This is really heroic, and we admire the thing as much as we possibly can.

However, whilst we recognise all that is good in a good priest, we ask, with all humility, whether they were monks, clerks, or priests, — those doctors of the poor who, at all hours of the day and night, hastened to the wretched couch of the afflicted; those doctors who during the cholera risked their lives a thousand times, with as much disinterestedness as intrepidity; those learned persons, those young practitioners, who, from love of science and humanity, solicited as a favour, as an honour, that they might go and brave death in Spain, when the yellow fever was decimating the population? Was it celibacy, was it disgust of the world, that gave such strength of mind to so many generous men? Did they hesitate to sacrifice their lives, occupied as they were with their pleasures, or the sweet cares of their

families? No, not one of them for this reason renounced the pleasures of life. The majority of them had wives and children, and it was because they knew the joys of paternity that they had the courage to expose themselves to death to save the wives and children of their brethren. If they did, in truth, act so valiantly for good, it was because they lived according to the eternal views of the Creator, who made men for society, and not for the sterile isolation of the cloister.

Are they Trappists, those millions of cultivators of the earth, those offsprings of the soil, who till and water with their sweat those lands which are not their own, and that for wages inadequate to the first wants of their children?

In fine (this may seem puerile, perhaps, but we hold it to be incontestable), are they monks, clerks, or priests, — those intrepid men who, at all hours of the night and day, rush with fabulous intrepidity into the midst of the flames of the furnace, scaling burning rafters, fiery walls, to preserve property which does not belong to them; to save persons unknown to them; and that simply without pride, or advancement, or fame, or any other reward than the daily bread they eat; without any honorary mark of distinction beyond the soldier's uniform which they wear; and that, moreover, without in the least pretending to a monopoly of courage and devotion, or of being some day canonised and enshrined? And yet we think that so many hardy sappers, who have risked their lives in twenty fires, who have snatched from the flames old men, women, and children, who have preserved whole cities from the ravages of fire, have at least as much merit before God and their fellow creatures as St. Polycarp, St. Fructueux, St. Privé, and others more or less sanctified.

No, no; thanks to the moral doctrines of all ages, all people, and all systems of philosophy, — thanks to the progressive emancipation of humanity, the sentiments of

charity, devotion, and fraternity are almost become natural instincts, and develop themselves wonderfully in mankind, when it is in that condition of relative happiness for which God has endowed and created it.

No, no; certain ultramontane intriguants and disturbers do not comprise solely, as they would have us believe, the monopoly of devotion of man to man, — the self-denial of the creature for the creature, in theory and practice. Marcus Aurelius is equal to St. John, Plato to St. Augustine, Confucius to St. Chrysostom. From antiquity to our times, maternity, friendship, love, science, glory, and liberty have, irrespective of all orthodoxy, an army of glorious martyrs to oppose to the saints and martyrs of the calendar. Yes, we repeat, the monastic orders who the most pique themselves on their devotion to humanity have never done more for their fellow creatures than during the period of the cholera did so many gay young men, so many pleasing and delightful women, so many heathen artists, so many freethinking men of letters, so many materialist misled men.

Two days had passed since the visit of Madame de Saint-Dizier to the orphan girls. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. The persons who had voluntarily been in attendance during the night at the provisional hospital in the Rue du Mont Blanc were just being relieved by other volunteer assistants.

"Well, gentlemen," said one of the new arrivals, "what is the state of things? Has there been any decrease to-night in the number of patients?"

"Unfortunately, no; but the doctors think that the contagion has now attained its extreme degree of intensity."

"Then we may hope to see a decrease."

"And amongst those whom we replace has any one been attacked?"

"Yesterday eleven of us came, to-day we are but nine."

"That is sad intelligence. And who are the two persons who have been so suddenly smitten?"

"One of the victims is a young man of five and twenty, a cavalry officer on leave, and who has been affected as though by a lightning stroke. He was dead in less than a quarter of an hour; and, although such circumstance is by no means unprecedented, yet we have been all greatly affected by it."

"Poor young man!"

"He had a word of warm encouragement, of hope, for all. He had so completely revived the hopes of many, that several among them who had less the cholera than the fear of cholera have left the hospital almost cured."

"What a pity! Such a worthy young man! Yet he died a glorious death; for there is as much courage required to die thus as in battle."

"There was only one to rival him in zeal and courage, a young priest of angelic appearance, named the Abbé Gabriel. He is indefatigable; he hardly reposes for a few hours; running from one to the other, and doing everything for everybody. He forgets none. His spiritual consolations, which he gives from the inmost depths of his heart, are not the mere lip-words which he deals out professionally. No, no, I have seen him weep at the death of a poor woman whose eyes he had closed after a distressing scene of agony. Oh, if all priests resembled him!"

"Yes, indeed, a good priest is so worthy of respect! And who is the other victim of the past night?"

"Oh, it was a fearful death! Let us not talk of it; I have still the horrid picture before my eyes."

"An attack of violent cholera?"

"If the unhappy patient had died only of this contagion, you would not have seen me so horrified at the recollection."

"Of what, then, did he die?"

"It is really a fearful tale. Three days ago they brought hither a man whom they believed to be suffering solely from cholera. You have no doubt heard speak of this person, the tamer of wild beasts who attracted all Paris to the Porte St. Martin?"

"I know the man you speak of, — his name is Morok; he played a scene with a black tamed panther."

"Precisely so; and I was present at a very singular representation, at the end of which a stranger, an Indian, for a bet, as I have heard, jumped on to the stage and killed the panther."

"Well, then, only imagine that at Morok's menagerie — he having been first brought hither as a cholera patient, and, indeed, presenting all the symptoms of the contagion — a fearful distemper suddenly broke out."

"A distemper?"

"Hydrophobia."

"And he has gone mad?"

"Yes; he declared he had been bitten a few days ago by one of the bulldogs who guard his menagerie. Unfortunately, he only made this confession after the terrible attack which cost the life of the unfortunate young man whom we so deeply regret."

"How did that happen?"

"Morok was in a chamber with three other patients. Suddenly seized with a kind of delirium, he got up, uttering horrid cries, and rushed like a madman into the corridor. The unfortunate young man whom we lament presented himself, and endeavoured to stop him. The struggle still more excited Morok's frenzy, and he threw himself on him, biting and tearing him, until at last he dropped down in horrible convulsions."

"Ah, indeed, it is fearful! And in spite of every assistance Morok's victim —"

"Died in the night in the midst of terrible suffering, for the excitement was so great that a brain fever rapidly declared itself."

"And is Morok dead?"

"I do not know. He was to have been sent to a hospital yesterday after having been manacled during his fit, which usually follows these violent crises; but in the meantime, until he could be taken hence, he was shut up in a chamber at the top of the house."

"But there can be no hope for him."

"He must be dead. The doctors declared that he had not four and twenty hours to live."

The persons who carried on this conversation were in an antechamber situated on the ground floor, in which those persons assembled who came voluntarily to offer their help and assistance. On one side this apartment communicated with the rooms of the hospital, and on the other with the vestibule, of which the window opened on to the courtyard.

"Oh," said one of the persons looking through the window, "only see what charming young persons have just alighted from that handsome carriage! How extremely they are alike! Really the resemblance is extraordinary!"

"Twin sisters, no doubt. Poor young girls! They are in mourning; perhaps they have lost a mother or father."

"They seem to be coming this way."

"Yes, they are ascending the steps."

And at this moment Rose and Blanche entered the antechamber with a timid and disturbed air, although a feverish and determined excitement sparkled in their eyes.

One of the two individuals who had been conversing, moved by the embarrassment of the young girls, advanced towards them with a tone of kind politeness.

"Do you seek any one, young ladies?"

"Is not this the temporary hospital of the Rue du Mont Blanc?"

"It is."

"A female named Madame Augustine du Tremblay, we are told, was brought here two days since. Could we see her?"

"I must observe to you, young ladies, that there is some danger in entering into the apartments of the patients."

"It is a very dear friend whom we desire to see," replied Rose, in a firm and gentle tone which spoke a disregard of danger.

"I really cannot tell you with certainty, mademoiselle," replied the gentleman, "whether the person you inquire for is here or not; but if you will take the trouble to enter the room on the left hand you will find the worthy Sister Martha there, who superintends the women's wards, and will give you all the information you may desire."

"Thanks, sir," said Blanche, curtseying gracefully, and with her sister she entered into the apartment that had been pointed out to her.

"Really they are very charming girls," said the gentleman, looking after the two sisters as they quitted the room; "it would be very terrible if —"

He could not finish.

Suddenly a tremendous uproar, mingled with cries of horror and alarm, was heard in the adjacent rooms. At the same moment two of the doors which communicated with the antechamber opened violently, and a great number of patients, the majority of whom were half naked, ghastly, and meagre, their faces drawn with fear, rushed hastily into the apartment, crying:

"Help! help! a madman!"

It is impossible to describe the desperate rush and struggle which followed this panic of affrighted persons as they pushed forward to the only door of the antechamber, in order to escape the danger they dreaded, and there contending and battling, and then going on

their hands and knees, trying to crawl out in order to escape by this narrow issue.

At the moment when the last of these frightened creatures contrived to reach the door, dragging himself along, completely exhausted, and with bleeding hands, — for he had been knocked down, and almost squeezed to death during the *mêlée*, — Morok, the object of so much alarm — Morok appeared.

He presented a horrid sight: a rag of a quilt was around his loins — his meagre and corpse-like loins — naked as well as his legs, around which were still the fragments of the ligatures that had confined him, and which he had broken. His matted, thick, yellow hair was hanging straight over his face, his beard seemed to stand on end, his eyes rolled fiercely and bloodshot in their orbits, glaring with unnatural lustre; the foam gathered on his lips, and from time to time he uttered hoarse, guttural sounds; the veins of his iron limbs were swollen almost to bursting, and he advanced by leaps like a wild beast, extending his bony and clenched hands.

At the moment when Morok had almost reached the issue by which those whom he pursued had contrived to escape, several persons in full health who had been attracted by the noise managed to close the door from without, as well as those which communicated with the wards of the hospital.

Morok found himself a prisoner.

He then ran towards the window to try and break it, and thus make his way into the courtyard, but suddenly stopping, he receded before the dazzling brilliancy of the windows, seized with the invincible horror which all persons attacked with hydrophobia experience at the sight of shining objects, and particlarly glasses.

Presently the sick persons whom he had pursued, huddled together in the courtyard, saw him through the window exhaust himself in furious efforts to open the

doors which had been closed upon him. Then recollecting the uselessness of his attempts, he uttered fierce cries, and began to turn rapidly about in the apartment like a wild beast which vainly seeks some issue from its cage.

Suddenly the spectators of this scene, who were looking through the windows, gave a loud shriek of anguish and affright.

Morok perceived the small door which led to the little apartment occupied by Sister Martha, and into which Rose and Blanche had but a few moments before retired. Morok, hoping to get out this way, pulled violently at the handle of the door, and contrived to open it half-way, in spite of the resistance he experienced from the other side.

For a moment the alarmed crowd saw in the courtyard the outstretched arms of Sister Martha and the orphan girls clinging to the door, and preventing it from being opened with all their might.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### HYDROPHOBIA.

At the sight of the violent and deadly struggles of Morok to force open the door of the chamber into which the orphan girls had flown for refuge, in company with Sister Martha, the terror of the numerous individuals belonging to the hospital who were assembled in agonising suspense in the adjoining court increased to a fearful degree.

"Sister Martha is lost!" exclaimed they, in affrighted tones.

"The door is incapable of offering a long resistance!"

"And there is no other means of quitting the room!"

"Two young females dressed in deep mourning are with Sister Martha."

"Oh, but," exclaimed a voice among the spectators, "it will never do to leave three helpless women exposed to the fury of this madman! Come on, friends," continued the intrepid individual, rushing up the flight of steps which led to the small antechamber known as Sister Martha's room.

"Hold, hold!" cried a number of voices, "'tis now too late to rescue those you would save; it would be folly to expose yourself in vain," and with these words several persons tightly grasped the daring man who was thus venturing his life, and forcibly held him back.

At this instant a cry arose of "Here is the Abbé Gabriel! He is always the first to rush to the succour of the distressed; see, he is coming from the rooms above. No doubt the noise has reached him!"

"He stops a minute to inquire the cause of all this disturbance!"

"What can he be going to do?"

It chanced that Gabriel, who had been engaged in administering religious consolation to a dying patient, had just learned that Morok, having succeeded in freeing himself from his bonds, had managed to escape by means of a small skylight in the chamber in which he had been temporarily confined; and foreseeing the dreadful mischief likely to result from such a circumstance, the young missionary, listening only to the noble impulse of his own courage, hastened forwards in the hope of preventing the evils he anticipated. By his orders one of the hospital servants followed him, carrying a brazier filled with burning embers, in the midst of which were several irons heated to a white heat; these irons were employed as cauteries by many of the surgeons during very severe cases of cholera.

A deadly paleness overspread the heavenly countenance of Gabriel, but a calm intrepidity dwelt on his fine forehead. Hurrying towards the scene of danger, and hastily dispersing those who flocked around and intercepted his passage, he directed his course towards the antechamber, but just as he approached it one of the patients cried, in a distressing tone:

"Ah, M. l'Abbé, it is useless your risking your life; those persons who can see into the apartment from the court say that Sister Martha is lost!"

Gabriel replied not, but quickly seized the key of the door; ere, however, he entered the chamber into which he was aware Morok had shut himself, he turned towards the servant carrying the brazier, and said, in a firm and steady voice:

"Are those irons thoroughly heated?"

"Oh, yes, M. l'Abbé, observe how white they are."

"Then await me here, and be ready at my first summons. As for you, my friends," continued he, address-

ing the poor, trembling crowd, who were literally shivering with terror, he said to them, "directly I have gone into that room, shut the door, and keep it closed — I will be answerable for all consequences; and mind," repeated he to the person who stood with the brazier, "come immediately I call you — but not an instant before!"

And then the young missionary, without further delay, undid the door.

At this instant a cry of terror, pity, and admiration burst simultaneously from the spectators of this scene, while those who had been nearest the entrance of the fatal chamber rushed precipitately, under the influence of involuntary alarm, to a spot of greater safety.

Casting his eyes upwards, as though invoking the protection of Heaven in the imminent peril to which he was about to expose himself, Gabriel pushed the door open — entered the room — and as quickly closed it again, thus shutting himself in with Morok, who by a last frenzied effort had managed almost entirely to pull open the door to which Sister Martha and the orphans clung with agonising dread, while they wildly shrieked aloud for help.

At the sound of Gabriel's footsteps Morok turned quickly around, and, at once abandoning his intention of forcing an entrance to the inner closet, he sprung furiously on the young missionary. In the meantime Sister Martha and the orphans, ignorant of the cause of the sudden retreat of their aggressor, availed themselves of the respite thus afforded to them to shoot a bolt withinside the door, and thus effectually to secure themselves from a fresh attack.

With haggard glare, and teeth convulsively clenched, Morok threw himself with extended hands on Gabriel with the intention of seizing him by the throat, but the missionary, whose rapid glance had well divined the coming shock, received it with unflinching firmness, and

at the moment when his infuriated adversary darted on him he caught him by the two wrists and forcibly and vigorously compelled him to lower his uplifted arms.

For a brief space Morok and Gabriel remained gazing on each other, breathless, silent, and motionless; then resuming the deadly struggle, the missionary throwing back his head, and assuming an attitude of resolute defiance, strove to prevent the endeavours of the wretched madman to seize him with his teeth, while he strove by continued springs and convulsive bounds to break from his hold.

Suddenly the beast-tamer seemed to become weak, his knees bent under him, his head grew livid violet and fell on his shoulder, his eyes closed. The missionary, believing that a temporary weakness had succeeded to the fit of madness, and that he was about to sink, ceased his grasp of him in order to give him aid. Feeling himself free, owing to his ruse, Morok suddenly sprang up in order to throw himself fiercely on Gabriel. Off his guard at this sudden attack, the missionary staggered as he felt himself seized and enfolded in the iron grasp of this madman.

Still redoubling his energy and efforts, struggling breast to breast, foot to foot, Gabriel in his turn made his enemy recede, and with a vigorous effort contrived to throw him and again grasped him by the hands to hold him down with his knee, almost without motion. Having in this way completely mastered him, Gabriel turned away his head to summon aid, when Morok with a desperate effort contrived to sit up and seize the left arm of the missionary between his teeth. At this sharp, deep, and terrific bite, which cut through his flesh, the missionary could not repress a cry of pain and affright. In vain did he try to disengage himself, his arm remained as if fixed in a vice between the convulsed jaws of Morok, who still maintained his hold.

This frightful scene lasted less time than is necessary to describe it, when suddenly the door leading to the vestibule opened, and several resolute persons, having heard from the affrighted patients the danger which the young priest ran, rushed to his succour, in spite of the desire he had expressed that no one should enter until he called.

The man who carried the small stove and the red-hot irons was with those who entered, and Gabriel, when he perceived him, said:

"Quick, quick, my friend, your irons,—I thought of them through a providence."

One of the men who came in had fortunately brought a blanket with him, and at the moment when the missionary contrived to extricate his arm from the teeth of Morok, whom he still kept down with his knee, they cast the blanket over the madman's head, who was then covered and bound without danger, and in spite of his desperate resistance.

Gabriel then arose, and tearing open the sleeve of his cassock, and baring his left arm, where there was visible a severe bite, bleeding, and of a blue colour, he made a sign to the man to approach; seized one of the red-hot irons, and twice with firm and sure hand applied the brand to his wound, with a heroic calmness which excited the admiration of all who beheld him.

But suddenly so many emotions, so intrepidly contended with, had a certain reaction; and Gabriel's brows were covered with heavy drops of perspiration; his long, brown hair clung to his temples, and he turned pale, and, staggering, lost all consciousness, so that he was obliged to be conveyed to an adjacent apartment in order to have certain restoratives applied.

By a singular chance the falsehood of Madame de Saint-Dizier had been borne out, although without her knowledge. In order to incline the orphans the more

surely to go to the temporary hospital, she had told them that Gabriel was there, which she did not believe, for she had, on the contrary, endeavoured to prevent their meeting, as it might be injurious to her projects, knowing as she did the attachment of the young missionary for the youthful orphans.

A short time after the terrible scene we have related, Rose and Blanche, accompanied by Sister Martha, entered into a large apartment with a most repulsive appearance, into which a great number of females suddenly seized with cholera had been admitted.

This vast chamber, generously lent to be converted into a temporary hospital, was richly decorated. The room then occupied by the sick women had served as a reception-room, and the white panels shone with sumptuous gildings; glasses magnificently framed separated the spaces between the windows, through which were seen fresh grass-plots in a delightful garden, already verdant and beautiful with the early blossoms of May.

In the midst of this splendour, these gilded cornices, on a floor formed of precious wood richly inlaid, were regularly laid four rows of beds of all shapes, the gifts of different persons, from the humble truckle-couch to the rich bed of carved mahogany.

This long apartment had been divided into two by a temporary wainscot running the whole length, and about four or five feet high, and thus they had contrived to establish the four rows of beds. This division ended a little way from each extremity of the apartment, and there were no beds in this reserved space, in which were the volunteer assistants when the sick had no occasion for their attentions. At one of these extremities was a high and magnificent marble chimneypiece, ornamented with gold bronze, on which were warmed different drinks. As a final trait to this picture with so singular an appearance, females belonging to the most different conditions of life voluntarily undertook in turns to watch the sick, whose

sobs and groans were always received by them with the consoling language of pity and hope.

Such was the place, at once singular and gloomy, into which Rose and Blanche hand in hand entered, some time after Gabriel had displayed such heroism in his struggle with Morok.

Sister Martha accompanied the daughters of Maréchal Simon, and, after having said a few words to them in a low voice, she pointed out to each of them one side of the division where the beds were ranged, then turned away to the other end of the apartment in order to give some directions.

The orphans, still under the effects of the extreme excitement caused by the peril from which Gabriel had saved them without their knowledge, were excessively pale, yet was their firm resolution in their eyes. Not only had they to accomplish for themselves an imperious duty of gratitude, and show themselves worthy of their brave sire, but there was also the salvation of their mother, whose eternal felicity might depend, as they had been told, on the proofs of Christian devotion which they gave to the Lord. It is unnecessary to add that the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, following Rodin's instructions, had in a second interview, cleverly contrived between herself and the two sisters without Dagobert's knowledge, by turns abused, excited, and fanaticised these poor, confiding, simple-minded, and generous girls, by urging to the most pitiable exaggeration all that was elevated and courageous in their nature.

The orphans having asked Sister Martha if Madame Augustine du Tremblay had been brought to this asylum within the last three days, the sister had replied that she did not know, but that by going through the women's wards they might easily learn if the person was there whom they sought.

The infamous devotee, Rodin's accomplice, who had cast the two children into the midst of such mortal peril,

had mendaciously affirmed that their *gouvernante* had been conveyed to this hospital.

Maréchal Simon's daughters had, both during their exile and during their painful journey with Dagobert, been exposed to very rude trials, but never had such a terrible sight as that which now presented itself been offered to their view.

The long row of beds, in which so many human creatures were lying, some writhing in pain and uttering deep groans, others giving forth the last deep sighs of agony, and others in the delirium of fever sobbing or calling loudly on the beings from whom death was about to separate them, — this spectacle, fearful even for men accustomed to illness, could not fail, according to the execrable idea of Rodin and his infamous accomplices, to cause a fatal impression on these two young girls, whom an excitement of feeling as generous and without reflection had compelled to this disastrous visit.

Then, to add to this fatal circumstance, which only occurred to them in all its poignant and profound bitterness when at the bedside of the first female they saw, it was cholera — that fearful death that had carried off the mother of the orphans!

Our readers will imagine the two sisters arriving in these vast apartments of such foreboding aspect, already much agitated by the terror with which Morok had inspired them, and commencing their sad search amongst those unfortunates, whose sufferings, whose agonies, whose death reminded them at each moment of the sufferings, agony, and death of their mother.

For one moment at the sight of this funereal chamber Rose and Blanche felt their resolution give way; a dark presentiment made them regret their heroic imprudence, and then they had for some minutes felt the painful shudderings of a chill and feverish attack, then their temples beat violently at intervals. But attributing these symptoms, of whose danger they were ignorant, to the

results of the fright which Morok had caused, all that was noble and courageous in them repelled these alarms, they exchanged an affectionate look, their courage revived, and both Rose on one side of the division, and Blanche on the other, began their painful search separately.

Gabriel, conveyed into the surgeon's apartment, had soon recovered. Thanks to his presence of mind and courage, his wound, cicatrised so promptly, could not have any serious consequences, and the wound dressed, he insisted on returning to the women's ward, for it was there that he was giving pious consolations to a dying female when he was told of the frightful dangers that might result from Morok's escape.

A few moments before the missionary entered this apartment, Rose and Blanche had arrived almost together at the termination of their distressing search, the one having traversed the left, and the other the right-hand division of the chamber.

The two sisters had not yet rejoined each other. Their steps had become more and more uncertain. As they advanced they were obliged to lean from time to time against the beds they passed; their strength was fast failing. Overcome by a giddiness, by pain and fright, they seemed only to move mechanically.

Alas! the orphan girls had been simultaneously struck with terrible symptoms of cholera. In consequence of that kind of physiological phenomenon of which we have already spoken,— a phenomenon very frequent with twins, and which had already several times displayed itself during two or three maladies, under which they had suffered at the same time,— once again this mysterious cause, submitting their organisation to simultaneous sensations and occurrences, seemed to resemble two flowers on the same stem, which by turns bud, blossom, and wither together.

Then the appearance of all the sufferings, all the agonies at which the orphans were present, as they traversed

the long chamber, had conspired to accelerate the development of this overwhelming distemper. Rose and Blanche had already, in their pain-stricken, agonised countenances, the deadly imprint of the contagion as they came forth, each on one side of the subdivision of the apartment which they had traversed without finding their *gouvernante*.

Rose and Blanche, separated until then by the high and long division, had not seen each other, but when at length they met a heartrending scene ensued.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

To the bright bloom of Rose and Blanche had succeeded a livid paleness, while their soft blue eyes, already sinking in their orbits, looked unnaturally large from the dark halos which surrounded them; their lips, lately so vermilion, had now assumed a dark violet hue, resembling that which had usurped the delicate transparent colouring of their cheeks and rosy tips of their slender fingers. One might have fancied that the bright red blood, so short a time ago coursing freely in their veins, had been changed by the blue frozen breath of death into the corpse-like lividness which now covered their lovely features.

As the sisters, tottering and almost sinking at every step, at length met at the termination of the screen, a cry of mutual terror and dismay arose from each, at the sight of the fearful inroads disease had already made in the countenance of both. "Why," they exclaimed, almost in the same breath, "and you, too, dearest sister, are ill, as I am!" Then rushing into each other's arms they burst into tears, and tenderly, gazing upon one another, said, "My sweet Rose, how very pale you look!"

"And so do you, dear Blanche."

"Do you feel a sort of icy shivering steal through your veins, as though your blood were changed to icicles!"

"Oh, yes, and my strength seems gone. I can scarcely distinguish one object from another."

"My throat and chest seem to burn like fire!"

"Can it be, dearest sister, that the hand of death is on us?"

"At least we shall, I trust, be permitted to die together."

"But what will become of our dear father?"

"And Dagobert?"

"Ah, dear sister!" exclaimed Rose (whose brain was evidently growing delirious), as she threw her arms around Blanche's neck. "Our dream — was true — see — see — the angel Gabriel has come to fetch us!"

And by a singular coincidence Gabriel at this moment entered the sort of half circle formed at each extremity of the salon.

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the young priest, "what do I see? The daughters of Maréchal Simon?" And, springing forward, he received the poor girls in his arms just as their own strength had forsaken them, and their languid heads, half closed eyes, and difficult respiration too truly betokened the rapid approach of death.

Sister Martha, who was close at hand, quickly answered Gabriel's cry for assistance, and by the aid of this excellent woman the dying sisters were carried to the bed reserved for the doctor, whose turn it was to watch the sick during the night.

Apprehensive lest this afflicting scene might operate unfavourably on the many sufferers already writhing under similar agonies as those which distorted the delicate limbs of Rose and Blanche, Sister Martha drew a large curtain so as to separate the orphans entirely from the rest of the salon.

So firmly had they clasped each other's hands during the violence of the convulsions which racked their tender forms, that it was found impossible to loosen their spasmodic grasp; and thus tenderly and lovingly entwined

they lay, while the usual remedies were applied,—remedies powerless, alas! to avert the deadly malady with which they were seized, but which, at least, seemed to afford a temporary cessation of their dreadful sufferings, and to restore a ray of reason and memory to their disordered and wandering brains.

At this moment Gabriel, standing at the head of their bed, contemplated them with ineffable tenderness and sorrow; the purest pity filled his heart, while tears of genuine grief trickled down his cheeks as he thought, with a shudder of impending evil, of the singular chance which thus rendered him a witness of the death of his two young and interesting relatives, so lately preserved by his intervention from the horrors of shipwreck and a watery grave; and in despite of his firm reliance on the wisdom of an all-wise superintending Providence, the missionary felt a cold chill creep over him, and an indefinite dread take possession of his mind, as he reflected on the melancholy fate of the young and innocent sisters, the death of Jacques Rennepont, and the wily arts by which M. Hardy had been induced to bury himself amid the cloistered solitudes of St. Herem, and almost at his last gasp to become a member of the Order of Jesus; and a fearful association of ideas presented themselves to the young priest, as he mentally counted over the names of four members of the Rennepont family, who had been in rapid succession borne down by a continuance of adverse circumstances; and with increased alarm he asked himself how it came to pass that a fatality so favourable to the base interests of the followers of Ignatius Loyola should thus have occurred. The surprise of the young missionary would, however, have given way to the most profound horror, had he known the part Rodin and his accomplices had taken in effecting the death of Jacques Rennepont, by exciting the evil passions and vices of the unfortunate man, through the medium of Morok; as well as the diabolical schemes

concocted by Rodin, and executed by Madame de Saint-Dizier, who, by working upon the noble and devoted natures of Rose and Blanche, had instigated them to an act of overstrained heroism, ending in their death.

Struggling momentarily to arouse themselves from the deep lethargy in which their senses had been plunged by the various remedies so ineffectually applied, the sisters half opened their large blue eyes, already covered with the thick mists of approaching dissolution, and suddenly perceiving the tender heavenly compassion with which Gabriel was observing them, the poor girls, whose brains still wandered, exclaimed delightedly:

"Sister! sister! see, see! the archangel has kept his promise! There he is, just as he appeared to us in our dream when we were in Germany, — yes — and as he came to us three days ago! Look, dear sister, his face is sweet and gentle as then it looked! He has come from heaven to fetch us."

"Alas, alas! but will our dying rescue our dear mother from the misery of purgatory? Holy, heavenly spirit, entreat the Lord to receive our beloved mother and ourselves."

Until then, stupefied by grief and half choked with tears, Gabriel had been unable to articulate a single word; but as the orphans uttered their touching prayer, he exclaimed:

"Cease, my children, to entertain fears for the eternal blessedness of your mother. Never did a more pure or saint-like spirit return to its Almighty Giver. How frequently have I heard my adopted parent speak of her rare virtues and noble character, rendering her so justly the pride and pattern of all who heard her name. Trust me, she has had her reward, and abundantly has her Heavenly Father blessed her for all her suffering so courageously supported while on this earth."

"Do you hear?" exclaimed Rose, while a bright flash

of joy momentarily illumined the livid features of both sisters. "Our mother is blessed and accepted in heaven!"

"Assuredly she is!" continued Gabriel; "but come, my poor children, dismiss these distressing ideas — try to rouse yourselves; you must not think of dying, remember your poor father's sufferings if he were to lose you!"

"Ah, yes, our father!" cried Blanche, with a sudden start; then in mingled words of reason and the wildest excitement that would have touched the hardest heart, she added, "Alas, alas! what will he do, when at his return he finds not his children? Father, dearest father, oh, forgive your poor girls; indeed, indeed, we did not think we were acting wrong, we wished to imitate your noble example, and to perform a devoted and generous action in coming hither to succour our poor Madame Augustine — our excellent, faithful *gouvernante.* And we little expected to die so soon and so suddenly; only yesterday we were so gay and happy!"

"Dear, good angel, will you not appear to our beloved father in a dream, as you did to us, and tell him that, when dying, our last thoughts — were — of — him? And that Dagobert knew nothing of our coming hither? — therefore beg our father not — to be — angry with him."

"Holy spirit," murmured the other dying girl, in a voice so feeble as to be scarcely articulate, "I entreat of you to go to Dagobert also — and tell him that on our death-bed — we ask his pardon — for the grief we know our death will — cause — him."

"And beg of our kind old friend," added Rose, trying to smile, "to pet our poor faithful dog Killjoy for us."

"And let me further beseech you, oh, good and pitying angel, to appear also to two persons we dearly love — and who have ever shown us so much kindness and affection. Carry the assurances of our love and gratitude — to that sweet Mlle. de Cardoville, and her good friend, La Mayeux. And when we are in heaven, we will watch over and bless all whom we have loved, and

who have loved us —" faintly articulated Blanche. "And now may God, in his great goodness — receive us to his presence — and permit us to rejoin — our beloved mother — never — again — to part from her."

"Ah, good archangel, you have promised us this — you remember in our dream you said, 'Poor children, who have journeyed from afar, you have traversed the earth, but to find everlasting rest with your departed and angelic mother!'"

"Oh, this is, indeed, dreadful!" exclaimed Gabriel, covering his agonised face with his hands; "thus to die — so young! so innocent! and no hope, no means of saving them. Almighty dispenser of all things, thy ways are, indeed, inscrutable! Alas, alas! why should these poor children be thus stricken by so cruel a death?"

Uttering a deep sigh, Rose made another strong effort for speech, while she indistinctly murmured:

"Let — us — be buried — together, — that — as in life we were never parted — so — in death — we may still be near — each other —"

And unable to articulate further, the sisters held their suppliant hands towards Gabriel, while their dying glances were fixed with beseeching earnestness on his countenance.

"Oh, ye martyrs of the purest and most generous devotion," cried the missionary, casting towards heaven his tear-fraught eyes, "ye angelic beings, treasures of candour and ingenuous innocence, ascend, ascend to those realms whither your Almighty Father summons, deeming, no doubt, this cold, bad world unworthy to possess you!"

"Sister! father!" were the last faint sounds that escaped the lips of the expiring sufferers. Then, as if by a last impulse, the sisters, by an instinctive movement, tried to fold their arms around each other, their heavy eyelids were partially raised, as if to enjoy one

parting look, a shivering seized their limbs, and then, as if exhausted by the paroxysm, they fell back motionless, while the last faint sigh issued from their half closed lips, now exhibiting all the pale lividness and violet tint of the frightful malady to which they had fallen victims.

And thus perished Rose and Blanche Simon.

After piously closing the eyelids of the poor orphans, Gabriel and Sister Martha reverentially knelt beside the bed, and offered up prayers for the repose of their souls.

Suddenly a loud and tumultuous noise was heard in the vast salon; and amid the heavy tramp of hurried steps, loud imprecations, and mournful cries, the curtain was hastily withdrawn from the bed of death, and Dagobert, pale, dishevelled, and distracted, broke in upon the solemn scene.

But at the sight which met his eyes, at the spectacle of his "children" thus extended, dead and motionless, with priest and sister of charity praying beside their insensible remains, the poor old soldier, petrified with horror, and struck to the heart with an agony too mighty for words, uttering a wild shriek of anguish, endeavoured to reach the bed, but in vain, and ere Gabriel, who had risen and was hastening towards him, could catch him in his arms, Dagobert had fallen backwards with fearful violence, his gray head striking heavily on the floor.

It is night — dark, gloomy, and stormy! One o'clock in the morning has just resounded from the church of Montmartre.

On the day preceding that night the remains of Rose and Blanche had been conveyed to the cemetery of Montmartre, both, according to their last desire, enclosed in one coffin.

Through the thick darkness which covered the field of death a pale, glimmering light was stealing stealthily along. It was the grave-digger! The man walked with more than his usual caution, picking his way by means

of a dark lanthorn; but this increase of precaution arose from his having a companion, who walked feebly and unsteadily, his figure enveloped in a large cloak, while the manner in which he held down his head, and the handkerchief repeatedly pressed to his eyes, told that he wept with a bitter and sincere grief that refused to be comforted.

This individual was Samuel, the aged Jew, and guardian of the house in the Rue St. François.

And so, also, had the old man come mysteriously to hold secret discourse with the digger of graves, and to obtain a great favour at his hands by means of a golden bribe, too weighty for refusal, on the night of the funeral obsequies of Jacques Rennepont, the first to die among the seven heirs to the disputed inheritance.

The favour sought and obtained was as singular as fearful.

After having traversed many of the thickly shaded cypress paths, densely studded with graves, the Jew and his conductor arrived at a small kind of open fence situated near the western wall of the cemetery. The night was so pitchy dark that nothing could be discerned beyond the small spot illumined by the faint rays of the lanthorn.

After moving his lanthorn about for some time, sometimes sweeping it along the damp ground, and occasionally holding it up, as though in search of some object to direct his search by, the grave-digger seemed to have found what he was searching for; and, showing to Samuel a large yew-tree, whose widely spreading branches extended far on all sides, he pointed to a newly raised mound of earth at its feet, saying, "That's it!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Oh, yes! two bodies in the same coffin. That is a thing we don't often have here."

"Alas, alas!" sighed forth the old Jew, with a bitter groan, "both in one coffin, said you?"

"And now, then, since you know the spot," inquired the grave-digger, "what do you want further with me?"

Samuel replied not, but, falling on his knees, piously kissed the earth forming the new-made grave. Then rising, with tears streaming down his aged cheeks, he approached the grave-digger and whispered a few, very few words in his ear; but the whisper was so feeble, it scarcely reached him for whom it was intended, and yet the two individuals were alone in the darkness and solitude of the deserted cemetery. And so did these men pursue their discourse, while the dark veil of night covered them, and her silence dwelt around.

The grave-digger, as though terrified by Samuel's proposition, at first peremptorily refused the request made to him, whatever it was. But the Jew employing, alternately, persuasion, prayers, entreaties, tears, and even the temptation of gold, for its jingling could be distinctly heard, the grave-digger, after a long resistance, at length appeared vanquished; and although still involuntarily shuddering at the idea of what Samuel had proposed to him, he said, in an agitated voice:

"To-morrow night, then, about two o'clock — !"

"I will be behind this wall," said Samuel, displaying by the aid of the lanthorn the latticed fence, which was low; "and, by way of giving you notice of my being there, I will throw three stones into the cemetery."

"That will do," answered the grave-digger, shuddering, and wiping away the drops of cold sweat which trickled down his brow; "I shall recollect — three stones thrown over that low fence into the cemetery." And then, as if he had regained a portion of his youthful strength, Samuel, spite of his extreme age, managed, by the grave-digger's aid, and by availing himself of the inequalities in the formation of the stone wall, to climb over the lowest part of it, and disappear; while the grave-digger hastened homewards with all imaginable speed, occasionally glancing over his shoulder with a look of intense

horror, as though he fancied himself pursued by some supernatural being.

On the night that witnessed the funeral obsequies of Rose and Blanche, Rodin wrote the two following notes. The first, addressed to his mysterious correspondent at Rome, alluded to the death of Jacques Rennepont, with those of Rose and Blanche Simon, the inveiglement of M. Hardy, and the renunciation of all Gabriel's claims, thereby reducing the number of claimants to two, Mlle. de Cardoville and Djalma.

This first billet written by Rodin, and addressed to Rome, merely contained these words:

"Take five from seven there remain two. Communicate this result to the cardinal prince, and let him be active and stirring, for I am advancing on — on — on!"

While the second note, written in a feigned hand, was directed and sent by a safe and sure mode of communication to Maréchal Simon, whose hands it was certain to reach. It merely contained these words:

"If there be yet time, return with all speed, — your children are dead! Their murderer will be pointed out to you."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### RUIN.

It was the day after the death of Maréchal Simon's daughters. Mlle. de Cardoville was still ignorant of the sad end of her young relatives; her features were radiant with happiness; never had she looked so lovely, — never did her eyes appear more brilliant, her complexion of a more dazzling whiteness, her lips of a more humid coral. According to her custom (eccentric it must be allowed) of dressing herself in a picturesque manner, Adrienne wore, although it was about three o'clock in the afternoon, a pale green gown, a very full petticoat, of which the sleeves and corsage were slashed with pink, and laced up with white of excessive delicacy. A light net of pearl concealed the thick roll of hair at the back of Adrienne's head, forming a kind of Oriental head-dress of delightful originality, and which suited admirably with the long curls of the young lady, which encircled her face, and fell almost as low as her finely rounded bosom.

To the expression of unutterable happiness which overspread the features of Mlle. de Cardoville was united a certain resolute, jesting, satirical air, which was not habitual to her. Her well-formed head seemed to be still more gracefully erect on her lovely white neck, and it seemed as though an ill-repressed ardour dilated her small, pink, and intelligent nostrils, and that she was awaiting with the utmost impatience the moment for an aggressive and ironical encounter.

Not far from Adrienne was La Mayeux, who had resumed in the house the situation she at first occupied. The young sempstress was in mourning for her sister; her countenance expressed a deep but softened sorrow. She looked at Mlle. de Cardoville with surprise, for she had never before seen the countenance of the young patrician express so much boldness and satire.

Mlle. de Cardoville had not the slightest coquetry, in the narrow and vulgar acceptation of the word, and yet she cast a glance at the mirror before which she was standing; then, after having restored its elastic curl to one of her locks of golden hair by rolling it around her ivory finger, she removed with her hand several imperceptible folds formed by the wrinkling of the thick material about her elegant corsage. This movement, and that which she made as she half turned her back to the glass to see if her gown was properly adjusted, revealed by a serpentine undulation all the elegance, all the graces of her figure, so delicate, well turned, and

"Small by degrees and beautifully less;"

for, in spite of the sculptural and full richness of her back and shoulders, as white, firm, and lustrous as Pentelic marble, Adrienne was also one of those who could make a girdle of her bracelet.

These delicious little womanish coquetries performed with indescribable grace, Adrienne, turning towards La Mayeux, whose surprise increased at every moment, said to her, with a smile:

"My gentle Madeleine, do not laugh at what I am going to say. What should you think of a tableau, which will represent me as you now see me?"

"Really, mademoiselle—"

"What! mademoiselle, still?" said Adrienne, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"But, Adrienne," continued La Mayeux, "I should

say it was a very charming tableau, and (as you always are) that you were dressed with exquisite taste."

"Then you do not find me any better to-day than on other days? Dear poetess, allow me to say that it is not on my own account that I ask this question," added Adrienne, gaily.

"I thought so," replied La Mayeux, with a gentle smile. "Well, then, in truth it is impossible to conceive a more becoming toilet. This gown, of apple-green and pale pink, heightened by the gentle brilliancy of the white ornaments, which harmonise so precisely with the hue of your hair, all combine, so that in my life I declare I never saw a more attractive tableau."

What La Mayeux said she felt, and was happy she could so express herself, for, as we have said, how deep was the admiration of this soul of poetry for all that was beautiful!

"Well," observed Adrienne, gaily, "I am delighted that you think me better to-day than any other day, my dear."

"Only —" continued La Mayeux, hesitating.

"Only?" said Adrienne, looking at the young work-girl with an interrogative air.

"Only, my dear," said La Mayeux, "if I have never seen you look more decidedly handsome, at the same time I never saw your features so expressive of resolute, satirical determination as at this moment. You have the air of impatient defiance."

"That is precisely what I desire, my dear little Madeleine," said Adrienne, throwing her arms around La Mayeux's neck with tender joy. "I must embrace you to show my delight at being so well understood, — for if I have, as you say so well, that provoking air, it is because I am expecting my dear aunt."

"Madame the Princesse de Saint-Dizier?" exclaimed La Mayeux, in a tone of fear; "that great lady who was so wicked, and behaved so shamefully to you?"

"Precisely so, my dear; she has requested an interview, and I shall be delighted to receive her."

"Delighted!"

"Delighted — rather an affected delight — a little satirical or so — a little in malice, perchance," replied Adrienne, gaily. "Only imagine, she regrets her flirtations, her beauty, her youth! Indeed, her very embonpoint distresses her, the dear, pious woman! And she hates to see me handsome, beloved, loving, and — thin; yes, above all things, thin," added Mlle. de Cardoville, laughing very heartily, and then adding, "you really cannot imagine, my dear, the hateful envy, the savage despair, which a stout, elderly female, of ridiculous pretensions, feels at the sight of a young, thin woman."

"My dear friend," said La Mayeux, seriously, "you jest, surely; and yet somehow, I don't know how, but the coming of the princess really alarms me."

"Dear, susceptible creature, be of good heart," replied Adrienne, affectionately; "this woman I do not fear any longer. In order to prove this to her, and at the same time to make her as wretched as possible, I mean to treat her, monster of hypocrisy as she is, all wickedness and infamy, — she who comes here, no doubt, with some abominable design, — I will treat her as if she were some inoffensive and ridiculous person; in a word, like a fat woman!" And again Adrienne laughed with all her might.

A *valet de chambre* entered, and, interrupting Adrienne's mirth, said to her:

"Madame la Princesse de Saint-Dizier begs to know if mademoiselle will receive her?"

"Certainly," said Mlle. de Cardoville.

The servant left the room.

La Mayeux was about to leave the apartment, when Adrienne retained her, taking her hand, and saying, in an accent of serious tenderness, "My dear, remain, I beg of you."

"You desire it?"

"Yes, I desire it for the sake of my vengeance," replied Adrienne, with a smile, "and to prove to Madame de Saint-Dizier that I have a tender friend; and, in fact, that I enjoy all earthly blisses at the same time."

"But, Adrienne," observed La Mayeux, "only reflect that—"

"Hush, my dear, here is the princess; remain—I ask it as a favour, as a personal service. Your wonderful instinct of heart will, perchance, detect the secret aim of her visit; the presentiments of your affection have already enlightened me as to the plots of that odious Rodin,—did they not?"

With such an entreaty, La Mayeux could not hesitate—she remained, but was going from the fireside, when Adrienne took her by the hand and made her sit down in the armchair she occupied by the hearth, saying to her:

"My dear Madeleine, keep your place, you owe nothing to Madame de Saint Dizier; it is different with me, for she comes to me as a visitor."

Adrienne had scarcely pronounced these words than the princess entered, with her head erect, her imposing air (and, as we have already said, she had one of the most imposing airs in the world), her step firm, and her demeanour haughty.

The most perfect characters, the most philosophical minds, yield almost always at some time to puerile weaknesses; a ferocious envy, excited by the beauty, the mind of Adrienne, had always had a great share in the hatred of the princess for her niece, although it was impossible to think of rivalry with Adrienne, and she never had seriously thought of such a thing. Madame de Saint-Dizier could not help, when she was coming to the interview she had requested, devoting a great deal of attention to her toilet, and of being laced, tied, and bound in to a triple extent in her shot-silk dress,—a

compression which rendered her countenance much more suffused than usual. In a word, the crowd of jealous and hateful sentiments which animated her against Adrienne had, at the mere thought of this meeting, excited so much perturbation in a mind usually calm and controlled, that, instead of a simple and plain toilet which, as a woman of tact and taste, she usually wore, the princess had the false *goût* to wear a gown *à la gorge de pigeon*, and a garnet-coloured bonnet, ornamented with a magnificent plume of the bird of paradise. Hatred, envy, pride of triumph (the devotee was thinking of the perfidious skill with which she had incited the daughters of Maréchal Simon to almost certain death), the execrable hope, so ill concealed, of succeeding in fresh plots, were all displayed in the countenance of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier when she entered her niece's hôtel.

Adrienne, without advancing a step to her aunt, yet rose very politely from the sofa on which she was sitting, made a half-curtsey full of grace and dignity, and then seated herself again, pointing out to the princess an arm-chair placed in front of the fireplace, one corner of which was occupied by La Mayeux, while she (Adrienne) was on the other side, saying:

"Pray, madame, be seated."

The princess turned very red, remained standing, and cast a regard of haughty and insolent surprise at La Mayeux, who, faithful to the desire of Adrienne, had bowed slightly when Madame de Saint-Dizier entered, without offering her her seat. The young sempstress had acted thus both from reflection and the voice of her conscience, which told her that the real superiority of position did not belong to this base, hypocritical, and wicked princess, but to herself, La Mayeux, so good, so devoted.

"Pray, madame, sit down," repeated Adrienne, in a soft tone, and pointing to the vacant seat.

"The conversation I have requested with you, mademoiselle," replied the princess, "must be secret."

"I have no secrets, madame, from my dearest friend; and you can, therefore, speak before mademoiselle."

"I know of old," retorted Madame de Saint-Dizier, with bitter irony, "that in all things you care very little for secrecy, and are very facile in the choice of what you call your friends. But you will permit me to act differently from you. If you have no secrets, mademoiselle, I have, and I do not make a confidante of the first comer;" and the devotee cast another contemptuous glance on La Mayeux.

Madeleine, hurt at the insolent tone of the princess, replied, gently and simply:

"I do not at present perceive, madame, any difference so very humiliating between the first and the last comer to the house of Mlle. de Cardoville."

"What! *she* talks?" said the princess, in a tone of proud and impertinent pity.

"At least, madame, *she* replies," retorted La Mayeux, in her soft tone.

"Do you comprehend that I wish to converse with you alone, mademoiselle?" said the devotee to her niece, impatiently.

"Excuse me, I do not comprehend you, madame," replied Adrienne, with an astonished air; "mademoiselle, who honours me with her friendship, will be so kind as to be present at this interview you have requested of me. I say she will kindly do so, because, doubtless, it will require all the concession of kind regard to be resigned to hear, for my sake, all the gracious, benevolent, charming things which I have no doubt you intend to communicate to me."

"But, mademoiselle —" said the princess, quickly.

"Permit me to interrupt you, madame," said Adrienne, in a tone of amenity, and as if she were addressing to the devotee the most flattering compliments. "In order

to place you on terms of perfect confidence with mademoiselle, allow me to inform you that she is fully aware of all the pious perfidies, the holy infamies, the religious indignities, of which you were anxious, but failed, to make me the victim. She knows, too, that you are a mother of the church, such as there are very few; may I then hope, madame, that now your delicate and interesting reserve will cease?"

"Really," replied the princess, with angry amaze, "I do not know whether I am asleep or awake!"

"Ah, indeed!" said Adrienne, in a tone of alarm; "the doubt you display as to the state of your faculties is very alarming, madame. Your blood mounts into your head, no doubt, for your face is very much flushed; you seem oppressed — compressed — depressed; perhaps (we may say so amongst women), perhaps you are laced a little too tight, madame?"

These words, uttered by Adrienne with all the affectionate seeming of interest and simplicity, all but choked the princess, who, in spite of herself, became crimson, and cried out, as she suddenly seated herself:

"Well, thus be it so, mademoiselle; I prefer such a reception to any other — it puts me at my ease — as you say —"

"Does it not, madame?" added Adrienne, with a smile; "at least we can frankly say all we have on our minds — which must at least have for you the charm of novelty. Come now, between ourselves, own that you feel much obliged to me for having thus put you in a position to throw aside, if for a moment only, that odious mask of devotion, mildness, and benignity, which must weigh on you so heavily."

When she thus heard the sarcasms of Adrienne (an innocent and excusable revenge, if we reflect on all the ill which the princess had done, or desired to do, to her niece), La Mayeux felt her heart pierced, for she (and with reason) dreaded, more than

did Adrienne, the princess, who replied with much *sang-froid:*

"A thousand thanks, mademoiselle, for your kind intentions and your feelings towards me; I appreciate them as they deserve, and as I ought, and I trust, without keeping you in expectation, to prove it to you."

"Yes, yes, madame," replied Adrienne, with earnestness, "tell us all about it — I am so impatient — so curious —"

"And yet," said the princess, feigning in her turn an ironical and bitter concern, "you are a thousand leagues off from guessing what I am about to tell you."

"Really? Indeed, madame, I feel that your candour, your modesty, are in your way," retorted Adrienne, with the same biting affability; "for there are very few things you can do or say that would surprise me, madame. Do you not know that from you I expect every and anything?"

"Perhaps, mademoiselle," said the devotee, pronouncing her words very slowly; "if, for instance, I told you that in four and twenty hours — by to-morrow, say — you were reduced to actual want."

This was so unexpected that Mlle. de Cardoville made a gesture of surprise, and La Mayeux shuddered.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said the princess, with triumphant joy, and in a tone that was affectionately cruel, as she saw the increasing surprise of her niece. "Come, confess that I do surprise you, although, as you said, very few things on my part could astonish you. How right you were to have given to our conversation the tone you did, else I should have required all sorts of apologies and introductions before I could have said to you, 'Mademoiselle, to-morrow you will be as poor as you are rich to-day,' whilst now I can say this quite easily, quite simply."

Her first surprise over, Adrienne replied, smiling, with a calmness which amazed the devotee:

"Well, I confess frankly, madame, that I have been surprised; for I expected from you one of those base infamies in which you excel, — some perfidy well plotted and most cruel. But how could I suppose that you would make so much ceremony for such a trifle?"

"To be ruined — completely ruined!" exclaimed the devotee; "ruined by this time to-morrow; you, so daringly prodigal, to see not only your income, but this hôtel, your furniture, horses, jewels, — all, everything, even to those absurd costumes of which you are so vain, — sequestrated! Do you call that a trifle? You, who squander with indifference thousands of louis, to see yourself reduced to a mere humble allowance, less than the wages you give to one of your women! Do you call that a trifle?"

To the intense disappointment of her aunt, Adrienne, who appeared more and more tranquillised, was about to reply to her aunt, when the door opened, and, without being announced, Djalma entered.

An engrossing and proud tenderness overspread the radiant brow of Adrienne at the sight of the prince; and it is impossible to depict the look of triumphant and haughty happiness which she turned on Madame de Saint-Dizier.

Never had Djalma appeared more decidedly handsome; never had more perfect bliss displayed itself in a human countenance. The Indian wore a long robe of white cashmere with a thousand stripes of purple and gold; his turban was the same colour and material, and a magnificent flowered shawl was fastened around his waist.

At the sight of the Indian, whom she had not hoped to meet at Mlle. de Cardoville's, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier could not at first conceal her great astonishment. There, then, were Madame de Saint-Dizier, Adrienne, La Mayeux, and Djalma present at the following scene.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### RECOLLECTIONS.

Djalma, never having seen Madame de Saint-Dizier before at Adrienne's, had appeared at first very much surprised at her presence. The princess, silent for a moment, contemplated in turns, with deep hatred and implacable envy, those two beings so handsome, so young, so loving, so happy; and then she shuddered suddenly, as if a souvenir of great importance presented itself suddenly to her mind, and for several seconds she remained deeply absorbed in thought.

Adrienne and Djalma profited by this pause to gaze on each other with an ardent idolatry which filled their eyes with a humid flame, and then, on a movement of Madame de Saint-Dizier, who appeared to have shaken off her momentary reverie, mademoiselle said to the young Indian, with a smile:

"My dear cousin, I wish to repair a forgetfulness, I confess a voluntary one (you shall learn why), by speaking to you, for the first time, of one of my relatives, to whom I have the honour of presenting you, — Madame the Princesse de Saint-Dizier."

Djalma bowed.

Mlle. de Cardoville continued rapidly, at the moment when her aunt was about to reply:

"Madame de Saint-Dizier came here to communicate most graciously an event the most fortunate for me, and of which I will presently inform you, my dear cousin, unless this good princess is desirous of anticipating me in the pleasure of doing so."

The unexpected arrival of Djalma, the recollections which suddenly occurred to the princess, no doubt greatly modified her first plans; for, instead of continuing the conversation as to Adrienne's ruined fortunes, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied, with a smiling air which concealed some evil design:

"I should be miserable, prince, to deprive my amiable and dear niece of the pleasure of announcing to you presently the good news to which she alludes, and of which, as a loving kinswoman, I hastened to inform her. Here are a few notes on the subject (and the princess handed a paper to Adrienne), which I hope will prove satisfactorily the reality of what I have announced to her."

"A thousand thanks, my dearest aunt," said Adrienne, taking the paper with the utmost indifference; "this precaution, this proof, were superfluous. You know I can always take your word, when it is in reference to any good-will towards me."

In spite of his ignorance of the refined treacheries, the smooth cruelties, of civilisation, Djalma was endowed with that exquisite tact which is a part of all uncultivated and easily excited natures, and he felt a kind of moral disquietude when he listened to this exchange of affected amenities. He did not penetrate their inverted sense, but yet they sounded as it were false in his ears; and, either from instinct or presentiment, he experienced a powerful prejudice against Madame de Saint-Dizier.

The devotee, reflecting on the seriousness of the incident she was about to bring forward, could scarcely contain her internal agitation, which was evidenced by the increasing suffusion of her cheeks, her bitter smile, and the wicked joy in her eye; and then, at the sight of this woman, Djalma could not overcome an increasing antipathy, and remained silent, attentive, and his handsome features even lost their original serenity.

La Mayeux also experienced a sort of increasing un-

easiness, while she continued alternately to gaze with fearful, timid glances on the princess, or supplicatingly towards Adrienne, as though imploring of her to cease a conversation from which the young needlewoman foresaw the most painful results.

But, unfortunately, Madame de Saint-Dizier had then too much interest in prolonging the interview, while Mlle. de Cardoville, deriving firm courage, and animated by still greater energy and confidence by the presence of the man she adored, seemed to revel in the dear delight of torturing her false, treacherous aunt by the sight of an affection which had resisted all the arts of herself and her accomplices to overthrow.

After a momentary silence, Madame de Saint-Dizier resumed, in a soft, insinuating tone of voice:

"My dear prince, you can scarcely imagine how delighted I was to learn by public report (for I assure you nothing else is talked of), — I say, how excessively gratified I felt upon hearing of your intense adoration of my dear niece here; for, really, without being aware of it, you have relieved me from a very awkward dilemma!"

Djalma's only answer was to regard Mlle. de Cardoville with a look at once surprised and sad, as though he thus mutely questioned her as to what her aunt could possibly mean.

Fully comprehending the appeal, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied to it, by saying:

"I will be more explicit, since I perceive you do not fully comprehend my last observation. But, to come to the point, you perceive that, as the nearest relation to this dear, giddy girl," looking towards Adrienne, "I was more or less responsible for her conduct in the eyes of the world; and behold, just as my difficulties with regard to my niece had reached their height, you, prince, most opportunely arrive to my assistance from the uttermost parts of the globe, boldly and courageously to take

upon yourself a charge which so infinitely puzzled and embarrassed me. Oh, really, your conduct is most charming, and, as far as myself and niece are concerned, most exemplary, — leaving the astonished world at a loss which to admire most, your courage or your simplicity."

Having thus spoken, the princess cast a glance of almost fiendish malice towards Adrienne, and with an air of deadly defiance seemed to await her reply.

"Pray pay particular attention to my good aunt, dear cousin!" answered Mlle. de Cardoville, with a calm and smiling manner. "From the instant that our affectionate relative became a witness of our mutual happiness, and found us, instead of being wretched, as our enemies would have had us, full of trust and confidence in each other, her heart overflowed with delight; and you have yet to know in what manner my good aunt relieves the overfullness of her tender feelings. But have a little patience, and you will be able to judge for yourself." Then, with the most natural air imaginable, Adrienne continued, "I know not how it is, dear cousin; but talking of the outpourings of my aunt's affectionate heart reminds me (without, certainly, there being the slightest connection between the two subjects) of what you were relating to me — you know, cousin — concerning a species of viper found in your country; how, in vainly attempting to bite, they break the teeth used in filtering the venom they inject into their victims, so that they are compelled to swallow their own deadly poison, and consequently perish by the very means intended for the destruction of others. Now, dear aunt, I am quite sure that your kind, sympathising nature will pity and compassionate these poor, disappointed, and baffled vipers!"

Casting a look of implacable hatred on her niece, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied, in a tone of ill-restrained agitation:

"I confess I do not precisely understand either the moral or the application of your 'fact in natural history,'

—for such, I presume, you desire it to be considered. May I inquire your opinion, prince?"

But Djalma answered not. Leaning on the chimney-piece, he continued sternly and searchingly to gaze on the features of the princess, while his mind seemed each moment to feel an increase of aversion and disgust for her.

"Dearest aunt!" exclaimed Adrienne, in a voice of feigned though gentle reproach, "have I then presumed too far on your kind and pitying nature? Is it possible you have no sympathy with or compassion for the unfortunate vipers? Alas, alas! for whom or for what, then, can your commiseration be excited? But, to be sure," added Adrienne, as though merely uttering her thoughts aloud, "they are too insignificant, too contemptible, to excite the notice of one who always flies at high and noble game." Then, perceiving the almost uncontrollable fury of her aunt, Adrienne gaily cried, "But let us not waste our precious time any more than our sympathies upon objects so undeserving to engross them; but I beseech of you at once, dear, kind aunt, to favour us with the many tender speeches I doubt not the sight of my cousin's and my own happiness has inspired a mind like yours!"

"Why, then, my beloved and amiable niece, since you so much desire it, I will speak with the candour you desire; first, congratulating this dear, kind, young man for having ventured hither, even from the wilds of India, to take the charge of you off my hands; and with a blind confidence above all praise has the worthy nabob relieved me of the stern necessity of controlling your actions, and even, poor, giddy girl! from being compelled to having recourse to such measures as passing you off in the world as having thoroughly lost your senses, as confining you as a confirmed lunatic in a private madhouse,—not that you were mad, but because it was absolutely necessary to gloss over your irregularities and

excesses under the mask of lunacy. You cannot have forgotten that you positively went such fearful lengths as to have men privately concealed in your sleeping apartment; and that upon one occasion we were publicly and openly scandalised by the police even finding a young man hid in your chamber. Upon that occasion, you know, we were obliged to call in the friendly coöperation of our worthy friend, Doctor Baleinier; and it was only by his noble and generous conduct in immediately conducting you to one of his asylums, and keeping you there a sufficient time, that the offended world learned to pity instead of despise you, believing, from the report I so industriously circulated, that you were afflicted with a flighty madness that rendered unfair to question your conduct or criticise your actions. Let's see, what was the name of the man dragged out of the recess where you had hidden him? Come, help me to recollect it; you can, if you like, I know. Ah, he was a very handsome young fellow, and, moreover, a great writer of poetry. He was called Agricol — Baudoin! Now I have it, though, you little, faithless, capricious thing, you pretend to have forgotten all about him. Ah, my dear prince, if you seek notoriety, you could not possibly go a more certain way to obtain it than by espousing this young lady; for never was a name or a person more the subject of general conversation than my niece has made herself."

And at these words, as hateful as unlooked for, Adrienne, Djalma, and La Mayeux, all remained mute and motionless, under their different feelings of resentment. The princess seeing no further occasion for concealing her fiendish joy and triumphant hatred, exclaimed, with flushed features and sparkling eyes, as she arose and addressed herself to Adrienne, in a loud, exulting voice:

"Yes, 'tis true every word I have uttered, and I dare you, mademoiselle, to contradict a syllable I have ad-

vanced! Was there, or was there not, a low, working man, a mere common artisan, found by the police in your bedchamber, leaving but one conclusion to be drawn, that he was at that time your favoured lover?"

At this vile accusation, the bright transparency of Djalma's amber complexion became suddenly livid and almost leaden in its hue; his large, fixed, and dilated eyes became encircled with white; his upper lip, red as blood itself, became rigidly drawn up, so as to display the convulsive clenching of his pearly teeth. In a word, the whole expression of his countenance became in a moment so fearfully threatening and savage that La Mayeux shuddered as she beheld it.

Carried away by his impetuous and overboiling rage, the young Indian experienced the same paroxysm of unreflecting rage, the same maddening whirlwind of fury, as causes the blood to rush with boiling eagerness to the brain of the man of unsullied honour and undaunted courage when some dastardly assailant strikes him the purposely dealt blow to provoke him. And if, during this terrible moment, rapid in its duration as the lightning which cleaves the sky, action had succeeded to thought in the mind of Djalma, all present would have perished by an explosion as frightful and sudden as that caused by the springing of a mine beneath our feet.

Djalma would have destroyed the princess, because she accused Adrienne of a vile act of treachery and wrong; Adrienne herself, because she had even been the object of a suspicion; La Mayeux, for having witnessed the accusation; while his own life would have been sacrificed as useless after being so basely and treacherously deceived. But, oh, prodigy! his wrathful, bloodshot, infuriated look no sooner encountered the mild, calm, dignified glances of Adrienne, impressed with all the serene confidence of conscious virtue and innocence, than the ferocious anger of the young man disappeared as instantaneously as it had manifested

itself. And even more than this, to the profound astonishment of the princess and La Mayeux, in proportion as the looks of Djalma were more and more riveted on Adrienne, as they became, in a manner, more penetrating and influenced by increased reason and intelligence, so did the countenance of the young Indian become, as it were, utterly changed, and the so lately convulsed and threatening features of Djalma became sweet and gentle, and reflected, as it were on a mirror, the peace and security which had returned to his heart from the close contemplation of a soul as pure and spotless as that which irradiated the lovely face of Adrienne. Let us endeavour to give some natural explanation of a moral change so delightful to La Mayeux, so full of discomfiture for the princess.

Scarcely had the venomous lips of Madame de Saint-Dizier distilled their poison into the ears of the young Indian than he quitted his reclining position by the chimneypiece, and, in the first burst of his fury, advanced towards the princess; then, as if desirous of restraining the violence of his fury, he grasped the marble as though he would reduce it to atoms, a convulsive agitation shook his frame, while his features were rendered scarcely recognisable by the distortions of passion and unbridled rage.

On her side, when Adrienne heard the vile charge made by her aunt, she too, yielding to the first impulse of irritated and outraged feelings, had partly arisen from her chair with flashing eyes and looks that threatened annihilation, but, comforted and immediately strengthened and assured by the consciousness of her own purity, her lovely face quickly resumed its usual expression of sweetness and tenderness, and it was precisely then her eyes encountered those of Djalma; and for an instant the feelings produced in the mind of Adrienne were rather those of sorrow than of anger; but as she again considered the menacing and fearful expression of

Djalma's physiognomy, she said, mentally, "Can a gross and vulgar-minded insult like the present thus excite him? Surely he must himself suspect my innocence!" But to this idea, as cruel as it was short-lived, succeeded the most ecstatic joy when the eyes of Adrienne, long and steadily fixed on those of the Indian, saw, as if by magic, the ferocious expression of those features soften into a look of adoring love and confidence, as radiant with happiness as they had erewhile been threatening.

And thus did the fiendish design of Madame de Saint-Dizier fall harmlessly to the ground before the noble, dignified look of sincere and confiding love visible on the countenance of her she sought to traduce. Nor was this all. At the very moment when a witness to this expressive scene, so marvellously evincing the wonderful sympathy existing between these two beings, who without even a word, and by a mere exchange of looks, had comprehended all, explained all, and become perfectly reassured, the princess was almost suffocating with rage, Adrienne, with a bewitching smile and a playfulness of manner wholly irresistible, extended her beautiful hand to Djalma, who, kneeling before her, imprinted on it a kiss so ardent and energetic as brought the bright, carnation blush of maiden modesty, mingled with the purest happiness, to the cheek of the fair girl before him.

The Indian then placing himself on the ermine rug at Madame de Cardoville's feet, in an attitude full of grace and respect, leaned his chin on the palm of one of his hands, and in mute adoration contemplated Adrienne silently, as leaning towards him, smiling and happy, she gazed, as the song goes, "in his eyes of eyes," with as much enthralling love as if the devotee, choking with hate, had not been there.

Adrienne soon, as if something were wanting to her bliss, beckoned to La Mayeux and made her sit beside her, and then, with a hand clasped in that of her excel-

lent friend, Mlle. de Cardoville smiled at Djalma adoring at her feet, and then cast a look on the princess, who was more and more in amaze, so sweet, firm, and calm, as depicted most nobly the invincible quietude of her happiness and the immeasurable height of her contempt for calumny, that Madame de Saint-Dizier, overwhelmed, overcome, stammered out several scarcely intelligible words in a voice that shook with anger, and then, completely losing all self-command, rushed hastily towards the door.

But at that moment La Mayeux, who feared some plot, some treachery, or perfidious espionage, resolved, after having exchanged a glance with Adrienne, to follow the princess to her carriage.

The angry disappointment of Madame de Saint-Dizier, when she saw herself thus accompanied and watched by La Mayeux, appeared to Mlle. de Cardoville so comic that she could not refrain from bursting into loud laughter; and at the sound of this contemptuous mirth the devotee, choked with rage and despair, quitted the house on which she had hoped to bring trouble and misfortune.

Adrienne and Djalma were left alone.

Before we continue the scene which passed between them, a few retrospective words are requisite.

It will be easily believed, that from the moment when Mlle. de Cardoville and the Indian had been brought more closely into communion, after so many crosses, their days glided on in unutterable happiness. Adrienne occupied herself particularly in bringing forth, one by one as it were, all the generous qualities of Djalma, of which she had read such glowing details in the books of travellers.

The young girl had undertaken this tender and patient study of Djalma's character, not only in order to justify the intense love she felt, but also because this trial, to which she had assigned a time, might aid her in tempering the excess of Djalma's love, a task the more meri-

torious for Adrienne, as she herself experienced the same passionate sentiments. With these two beings, so perfectly endowed by the Creator, the passions and the dreams of the soul formed an equilibrium and maintained their mutual spring marvellously, God having endowed these two lovers with exceeding beauty of person and admirable beauty of heart, as if to render legitimate the irresistible attraction which drew them to each other.

What was to be the term of this trial which Adrienne imposed on Djalma and herself was what Mlle. de Cardoville intended to tell Djalma in this interview, after the sudden departure of Madame de Saint-Dizier.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE TRIAL.

Mlle. de Cardoville and Djalma remained alone.

Such was the perfect confidence which had succeeded in the Indian's mind to his first movement of ungovernable rage when he heard the infamous calumny of Madame de Saint-Dizier, that when alone with Adrienne he did not say one word in reference to this unworthy accusation.

On her side the young lady was too proud, and had too much consciousness of the purity of her love, to condescend to any explanation with Djalma. She would have thought it alike offensive to him and to herself.

The two lovers then began their conversation as if the incident referred to by the devotee had never occurred.

The same disdain was extended to the notes which, according to the princess, were to prove the impending ruin of Adrienne. The young lady had placed the paper on a small table near her without reading it. With a gesture filled with grace, she made a motion to Djalma to sit beside her, which he obeyed, quitting not without regret the place he had occupied at the young lady's feet.

"My friend," said Adrienne to him, in a soft and serious tone, "you have often and impatiently asked me when the termination of the trial which we have imposed on each other would arrive; it has nearly arrived now."

Djalma started, unable to repress a slight cry of happiness and surprise, but this exclamation, almost tremblingly uttered, was so sweet, so gentle, that it seemed

rather the first sound of unutterable gratitude than the passionate utterance of happiness.

Adrienne continued:

"Separated, surrounded by snares and falsehoods, mutually deceived as to our sentiments, yet still we loved each other; in this we followed an irresistible and sure attraction stronger than opposing events, but afterwards during the past days in the long retreat, during which we have lived isolated from all and of all, we have learned to esteem and honour each other the more. Given up to ourselves — free both of us — we have had the courage to resist all the burning impulses of passion in order that we might hereafter give ourselves to it without remorse. During these days our hearts have been open to each other, and we have therein read all — all. Thus, Djalma, I believe in you, and you believe in me; I find in you what you find in me — do you not? — every possible, desirable, and human guarantee for our happiness. But to our love there is wanting a consecration, and in the eyes of the world in which we are called to live there is but one only, — marriage, and that binds for the whole of life."

Djalma looked at the young girl with surprise.

"Yes, an entire lifetime; and yet, who can answer for ever to the sentiments of all their life?" continued the young girl; "a God who knows the future of all hearts alone can irrevocably bind certain beings — for their happiness; but, alas! to the eyes of human creatures, the future is impenetrable. Thus when we are unable to answer safely for more than the sincerity of a present sentiment, is it not to commit a mad, selfish, and impious action to take upon us bonds that are indissoluble?"

"It is sad to think so," said Djalma, after a moment's reflection, "but it is true," and he looked at the young lady with an expression of increasing surprise.

Adrienne continued, in a tone of considerable emotion:

"Do not mistake my thought, my dear friend; the love of two beings, who, like us, after a thousand trials of the heart and soul and mind, have found in each other all the assurances of desirable happiness, — a love like ours, — is indeed so noble, so great, so divine, that it cannot be without divine consecration. I have not the religion of the mass like my venerable aunt; but I have the religion of God; from him our love has emanated. He should be piously glorified for it, and it is therefore by invoking him with profoundest gratitude that we ought not to swear to love each other for ever, — not to belong to each other for ever."

"What mean you?" cried Djalma.

"No," continued Adrienne, "for no person can utter such an oath without falsehood or madness; but we may, in the sincerity of our soul, swear to do both of us loyally all that is humanly possible in order that our love may last perpetually, and that we may be for ever united. We ought not to take upon us these indissoluble bonds; for if we always love, of what use are these chains? If our love ceases, of what use are these chains, which are therefore but intolerable tyranny? I ask you this, my dear friend."

Djalma only replied by a gesture of respect, which showed his wish that Adrienne should continue.

"And then," she resumed with a mixture of tenderness and pride, "from respect for your dignity and my own, my dear friend, I will never take an oath to observe the law made by man against woman with haughty and brutal egotism, a law which seems to deny the soul, the heart, and mind of woman, a law with which she cannot comply without being enslaved or perjured, a law which as a maiden deprives her of her name; as a wife, declares her in a state of insensible imbecility, as it imposes on her a degrading state of tutelage; as a mother, refuses her every right and power over her children; and, finally, as a human creature, renders her

subservient, places fetters for ever on her at the good pleasure of another human creature, her equal and the same before God! You know, my dear friend," added the young girl, with impassioned excitement, "you know how much I honour you — you whose father was called the Father of the Generous; and I do not therefore fear that your noble and generous heart would ever exercise these tyrannical rights against me; but in my life I never told a lie, and our love is too holy, too celestial, to be submitted to a consecration bought by twofold perjury, — no, I never will take an oath to observe a law which my dignity and my reason revolt at. Soon the rights of women will be reëstablished; soon divorce will be law; and I will observe these usages because they accord with my own feelings, my own heart, with what is just, what is possible, what is human." Then interrupting herself, Adrienne added, with emotion so deep, so gentle, that a tear glistened in her lovely eyes, "Oh, if you knew, my friend, what your love is to me; if you knew how precious, how sacred to me is your happiness, you would excuse, you would comprehend these generous superstitions of a loving and loyal heart, which would see a sad presage in a lying and perjured consecration. What I wish is to fix and retain you by attraction, to enchain you by happiness and leave you free, to be indebted for you to yourself alone."

Djalma had listened to the young girl with fixed and passionate attention. Proud and noble-minded, he idolised her proud and noble disposition. After a moment's reflective silence he said, in his sweet and sonorous voice, and in a tone that was almost solemn:

"Like you, lying, perjury, and iniquity revolt me; like you, I think that a man degrades himself in accepting the right to be tyrannical and cowardly, however resolved he may be not to use this right; like you, it would be impossible for me to think that it was not to your heart only, but to the eternal constraint of an

indissoluble union, that I owed all that I would only have from yourself alone; like you, I think there is no true dignity but in perfect freedom. But you have said that you desire a divine consecration to love so great, so holy, and if you reject oaths that you could not take without madness, perjury, there are others which your reason — your heart — could and would accept. Who, then, shall give us this divine consecration? Before whom shall we pronounce these oaths?"

"In a very few days, my friend, I think I can, I believe I shall be able to tell you. Every evening after your departure, I had no other thought but this: to find some means of plighting ourselves, you and myself, in the eyes of God, but irrespective of the laws and in those limits only which reason approves, without offence to all that is required by the habits of the world in which it may hereafter suit us to live, and whose apparent susceptibilities must not be wounded. Yes, my dear friend, when you shall know in what noble hands I shall confide the office of uniting us, who it is that will thank and glorify God for this union, — a sacred union which will still leave us free that it may leave us worthy, — you will say, as I do, I am sure, that never were purer hands than will be laid on us. Excuse me, my dear friend, all this is very serious, as serious as our happiness, as serious as our love. If my words seem to you strange, my ideas unreasonable, say, oh, say it, my friend, and we will seek and find a better mode of reconciling what we owe to God, what we owe to the world, with what we owe to ourselves. They say that lovers are always mad," added the young lady, with a smile, "whilst I say there are none more sensible than real lovers."

"When I hear you speak thus of our happiness," said Djalma, with deep emotion, "and speak with that serious and calm tenderness, it appears as if I saw before me a mother incessantly occupied with the future of her adored child, endeavouring to surround it with everything that

can make it courageous, strong, and noble-hearted, trying to turn from its path all that is base and unworthy. You ask me to contradict you, Adrienne, if your ideas seem strange to me. But you forget, then, that that which makes my faith, my confidence in our love, is, that I experience it with the same views as yourself. What offends you offends me, what revolts you revolts me; and when but now you quoted to me the laws of this country, which in a woman respects not even a mother, I thought with pride that in our barbarous countries, where a woman is a slave, at least she is free when she becomes a mother, — no, no, these laws were not made for you or for me. Does it not prove the holy respect which you bear to our love that you desire to elevate it above all those unworthy servilities which would thus stain it? And, Adrienne, I must tell you that I have often heard the priests in my country say that there were beings inferior to the divinities, but superior to other creatures. I did not believe these priests then — here I believe them!"

These last words were pronounced, not with an accent of flattery, but in a tone of the most sincere conviction; with that sort of passionate veneration, of almost timorous fervour, which characterise the believer, when he speaks of his belief. But what is impossible to render is the undescribable harmony of these almost pious words, and the soft and serious tone of the young Indian's voice. It is impossible to paint the expression of loving and intense melancholy which gave an irresistible charm to his handsome features.

Adrienne had listened to Djalma with an indescribable mixture of joy, gratitude, and pride. Then laying her hands upon her heart, as if to repress its violent pulsation, she said, looking at the prince with deep affection:

"Yes, yes, always good, always just, always great! Oh, my heart, my heart, how it beats, proud and re-

joicingly! Be blessed, O *mon Dieu*, for having created me for this adored lover! Ah, the extent of happy, ardent, and free love is not yet known! Oh, thanks to us two, Djalma, the day on which our hands are united, what hymns of happiness and gratitude will mount to heaven!"

As she spoke thus, Adrienne (in Djalma's dazzled eyes) became more and more an ideal being, as, yielding to the force of her love, she cast on him her radiant glances.

Then, overcome by the intensity of his own passion, the Indian, throwing himself at the feet of his mistress, exclaimed:

"Oh, do not speak to me thus! What years of my life would I not give to hasten the day of happiness!"

"Nay, nay, not years, — they belong to me!"

"Adrienne, dost thou love me?"

The lovely girl made no reply, but her look spoke for her; and Djalma, taking both her hands in his, exclaimed in impassioned accents:

"To-day — this happy day — why delay it?"

"Because our love, in order to have no reserve, ought to be consecrated by the benediction of God!"

"Are we not free?"

"Yes, yes, beloved, we are free; but let us prove worthy of our liberty."

"Adrienne, have pity!"

"And I ask pity of you; yes, pity for the sanctity of our love. Do not profane it in the flower — that would be to see it soon wither! Courage, my friend, for yet some days, and heaven — without remorse, without regrets —"

"But until then hell — nameless tortures — for you do not know, no, you do not know, when, after each day I quit this house, that your recollection follows me, surrounds, burns me! It seems as though it were your

breath that inflames me and destroys my sleep, — and each night I sob and call for you, as I did when I believed you did not love me — and yet I know now that you are mine, that you really love me! But to see you — to see you each day more beautiful, more adorable, and yet each day to leave you more deeply enslaved, adoring — you do not know — "

Djalma could not proceed. Adrienne had also experienced "the charming agonies of love," and perhaps more acutely than Djalma, and she felt now all the strength and all the weakness of passion. But with an effort she suddenly quitted her seat, and went towards the apartment in which La Mayeux usually remained, calling for her as she proceeded.

A second had scarcely elapsed ere Mlle. de Cardoville, in tears and most unutterably lovely, clasped La Mayeux in her arms, whilst Djalma knelt at the threshold of the door, which he did not, from respect, venture to cross.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### AMBITION.

A VERY few days had elapsed since the interview lately recorded between Djalma and Adrienne, and Rodin was alone in the same apartment in the Rue Vangirard that had witnessed his firm endurance of the severe remedies applied by Doctor Baleinier; his hands were plunged into the recesses of the back pockets of his old great-coat, while, with head bent forwards on his breast, the Jesuit was evidently buried in profound thought, the alternations of his step from slow to rapid pacing of the floor alone indicating the agitation of his mind.

"As regards Rome," muttered Rodin to himself, "I feel quite easy, everything is progressing as I could wish. The abdication is in a manner agreed upon, and, if I can only pay the price demanded, the cardinal prince promises me a majority of nine voices at the approaching conclave. Our general is on my side. The doubts entertained respecting my sincerity by Cardinal Malipieri have either died away of themselves or have found no support in Rome. Still I am not wholly without uneasiness touching the correspondence Father d'Aigrigny is said to hold with Malipieri. I have been unable to discover anything certain respecting it. No matter, this old soldier is a condemned man, his affairs are drawing to a crisis; a little patience and he will be — executed!"

And here the livid lips of Rodin were distorted by one of those fiendish laughs that gave to his whole countenance an almost diabolical expression. After a pause he resumed:

"The funeral obsequies of that freethinker and philanthropic friend to mankind in general, and the working classes in particular, took place at St. Herem the day before yesterday. François Hardy ceased to live while revelling in the delight of one of his absurd fits of crazy enthusiasm called religious ecstasy! I had his formal deed of gift before; but this event makes the thing irrevocable. Living men sometimes recall their bequests — the dead never do."

For a few seconds Rodin remained silent and reflective, then said, with pointed energy:

"There remain, then, only this red-haired girl and her lovesick mulatto. To-day is the twenty-seventh of May. The first of June is close at hand, and as yet this pair of loving fools have resisted all my endeavours to bring them to my wishes. The princess imagined she had hit upon such a clever idea, and certainly I was of her opinion; it seemed such a sure stroke to recall the finding of Agricola Baudoin in the chamber of her crack-brained niece. And at first the Indian tiger roared with savage jealousy; but scarcely had the loving turtle-dove cooed out a repetition of her fond notes than the weak and imbecile savage came crouching to her feet, drawing back the claws previously sharpened by a well-aimed appeal to his violent and vindictive feelings. 'Tis a pity — quite a pity! Something ought to have come of that."

And again Rodin resumed his rapid pacing the floor.

"Nothing is more surprising," said he, "than the singular production of one idea from another! How strange that my applying the simile of a turtle-dove to this red-haired wench should have brought back to my mind the recollection of that infamous old woman called Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, who was courted and followed by that fat fool, Jacques Dumoulin; but whom, I trust, will be carried off by the Abbé Corbinet, for our benefit and advantage. I want to know how comes

it that the employment of a single term brings this hideous old hag back to my thoughts? I have often observed, that in the same manner as a rhymester is indebted to the most singular chances for some of his best rhymes, so the beginning of our most brilliant ideas may frequently be traced to some association as absurd as that which has just occurred to me; as ridiculous as the very thought of bringing together the images of an old witch like La Sainte-Colombe and a young beauty such as Adrienne de Cardoville. The two suit each other about as well as a ring would a cat, or a necklace adorn a fish. Well, well, I must try what my brain can produce out of these jumbled notions."

Scarcely had these words escaped the lips of Rodin than he started and a malignant joy gleamed over his hideous features, which was succeeded by a sort of meditative surprise, such as the philosopher or the student might be supposed to experience when astonished and delighted by some unexpected discovery; and with head erect, expanded gaze, sparkling eye, his hollow, flaccid cheeks distended by a sort of proud and exulting feeling, Rodin stood; his tall, gaunt figure drawn up to its utmost height, his arms folded, as with an air of indescribable triumph, he exclaimed:

"Surely the workings of the mind are wonderful — admirable; far beyond our poor powers to comprehend them! Oh, the inexplicable links which unite the chain of human reasoning! To think that from a mere word or term of derisive reproach should emanate an idea as great, as vast, and luminous! Comes this singular faculty of the strength or infirmity of our mental powers? I know not; but it is strange — passing strange! But now I compared this red-haired girl to a dove; by the chain of ideas thus engendered I was carried on to recollection of the detestable old hag who has trafficked in the souls and bodies of so many of her fellow creatures. Then mere commonplace phrases came

into my head, — a ring to a cat, a necklace to a fish! And suddenly, at the word necklace, a sudden light sprung to my eyes and cleared away the mist and darkness in which all my attempts to disunite these invulnerable lovers have hitherto been wrapped. Yes, the talismanic word, necklace, has unlocked that portion of my brain which has been blocked up by stupidity and want of judgment for I know not how long."

And again pacing the room with increased rapidity, Rodin continued:

"Yes, yes, it is a thing worth trying; and the more I reflect upon it, the more feasible does the project appear to me. The only thing is about that old hag, De la Sainte-Colombe; by what means shall I — ? Oh, there is that great, fat simpleton, Jacques Dumoulin — right! And then the other, where to find her? Or, if found, how prevail on her? Ah, there's the difficulty! Now comes a stumbling-block in my way. I was rather too hasty in calling out 'Victory!'"

And then with renewed energy Rodin recommenced his rapid pace up and down the room, biting his nails with a sort of intensity of thought and fixedness of idea which manifested itself after a time by sending large drops of perspiration to his brow, trickling down his meagre, sallow cheeks, as the Jesuit continued his agitated walk. The increased tension of his mind sometimes overcame him so much that he would suddenly stop, and then, vehemently stamping on the ground, resume his troubled march, sometimes raising his eyes upwards as if seeking some inspiration; then, while he gnawed the nails of his right hand, he continually rubbed down his bald skull with his left hand, giving utterance to various exclamations expressive of vexation, anger, or hope, sometimes as though sanguine of success, at others, breathing utter despair. Had the cause of all these painful meditations been a less atrocious one, it might have afforded a curious and interesting spectacle

to have been an invisible witness of the workings of a mind so powerful, so dangerous; to follow the rapid succession of thoughts and desires as impressed upon his agitated countenance, as it worked and varied according to the different lights in which his mental vision reviewed the project upon which he had concentrated all his resources, and employed all the strength and zeal of his masterly spirit.

Apparently his deliberations were bringing the subject of his reverie to a satisfactory conclusion; for all at once Rodin exclaimed:

"True, true! It is venturesome, bold, and hazardous; but, at least, it can instantly be put in practice, and, should success attend it, the advantages will be incalculable. Who can undertake to foretell all the consequences of the explosion of a mine?" Then, yielding to an enthusiasm which was by no means natural to him, the Jesuit, with flashing eyes and exulting mien, exclaimed, "Oh, the passions, the passions! What a magnificent keyboard for such as possess a finger firm yet light and skilful enough to touch it properly! And what a stupendous gift is the power of commanding and arranging our thoughts! What a field of mental wonders does it not embrace! Let those who talk largely of the miraculous process by which an acorn becomes an oak, a grain of wheat an ear, henceforward bow in silence to the superior operation of thought; for while the grain of wheat must have months ere it can become an ear, and the acorn demand a century ere the tree it gives birth to attains maturity, from merely the combination of a few letters, forming the work necklace, — ay, from that single word, dropped, as it were, by accident into my brain a few minutes ago, — has sprung up an immense, a gigantic structure, which, like the oak, has a thousand ramifications and roots, shooting upwards and stretching downwards where none see them. And all for the great glory of the Lord! Yes, for

that alone do I thus toil and rack my understanding to devise what is fittest to be done; but then it is that the Lord may be served according to my notions and views, when I reach, as reach I must, the aim and end of my ambition, for these Renneponts will have passed away like so many shadows; and what difference can it make to moral order, whether the whole family be expunged from the face of the earth or not? Who would ever dream of putting the lives of such insignificant beings in the same scales as the interests of such a cause as ours, whilst the splendid inheritance my daring hand casts into the balance will cause me to ascend to a height from whence even monarchs are controlled and people compelled to obey?" Then, bursting into a fit of savage laughter, Rodin resumed, as he precipitately traversed the chamber to and fro, "Only let me reach the good fortune of Sixtus V., — that is all, — and the world shall see, to her infinite astonishment, what spiritual dominion and authority are when placed in such hands as mine, — of a priest who has reached the age of fifty years, forswearing all the temptations of this life, and who, even if he should ascend the papal chair, would still live on his frugal, self-denying, anchorite's life!"

The expression of Rodin's features was really frightful to behold, as he pronounced these words. All the sanguinary, sacrilegious, and vile ambition recorded in the histories of those popes whose crimes have obtained for them a disgraceful notoriety seemed to glow in characters of blood on the forehead of this worthy follower of Ignatius. A thirst for dominion seemed to inflame the impure blood of the Jesuit, a burning fever consumed him, and large drops of thick, clammy perspiration stood on his agitated features.

All at once, the sound of a travelling carriage entering the courtyard of the house in the Rue de Vangirard attracted the attention of Rodin, who, vexed with him-

self for having given way to so much excitement, drew from his pocket a dirty handkerchief composed of red and white checks; this he dipped in a glass of water and bathed his forehead, temples, and cheeks, gradually approaching the window as he did so to endeavour to make out, by peeping through the half open blinds, who was the traveller whose arrival had put all his ambitious reveries to flight.

A projecting portico before the door at which the carriage had stopped, however, effectually screened it from the scrutinising glance of Rodin.

"No matter," said he, gradually recovering his ordinary coolness and self-possession, "I shall soon know who has arrived. Let me write at once to that fellow, Jacques Dumoulin, to come hither immediately; he served me well and faithfully as regarded that wretched girl who lived in the Rue Clovis, and almost cracked the tympanum of my ears by screaming out her songs from Béranger. Dumoulin may again render me a considerable assistance; I have him in my power, and he dare not refuse." So saying, Rodin seated himself before his desk and began to write.

A few seconds had scarcely elapsed when some person tapped at his door, doubly locked, though contrary to the established rules of his Order; but from time to time, by dint of his power and influence, Rodin contrived to obtain his general's permission to be relieved of the troublesome presence of a *socius*, always protesting the necessity for his being allowed entire freedom from all restraint, the better to work out the Company's good; and by this means Rodin had contrived to evade most of the disagreeable and stringent regulations of the society to which he belonged.

A servant entered and delivered a letter to Rodin, who, calmly taking it from him, held it in his hand without opening it, and said, with an air of indifference:

"What carriage was that which just now arrived?"

"It came from Rome, reverend father," replied the servant, bowing.

"From Rome?" repeated Rodin, eagerly; and spite of himself a vague inquietude spread itself over his features; then, in a calmer manner, he added, still holding the unopened letter in his hands, "And who was in the carriage? Do you happen to know?"

"A reverend father belonging to our holy Company."

Spite of his intense curiosity, — for Rodin well knew that a reverend messenger thus travelling post was always the bearer of some important mission, — he asked not another question; but changing the subject, merely said, "From whence comes this letter?"

"From our holy establishment at St. Herem, reverend father."

Looking more attentively at the handwriting, Rodin recognised it as that of D'Aigrigny, who had been entrusted to watch the last moments of M. Hardy. The letter contained these words:

"I despatch an express to your reverence for the purpose of communicating a fact more astonishing than important. After the funeral rites had been performed over the remains of M. François Hardy, the coffin containing the body was placed temporarily in a vault of our chapel, preparatory to its being possible to convey it to the cemetery of the neighbouring town. This morning, when some of our people went down to the vault for the purpose of commencing the necessary preparations for the removal of the corpse, the coffin with its contents had disappeared."

Rodin started with surprise, and exclaimed, "Most strange!" Then he continued the perusal of the letter.

"All our attempts to discover any traces of this singular and sacrilegious act have utterly failed; but the chapel, standing (as you know) at a distance from the main building, and being wholly unprotected, nothing could have been easier than for any person to enter

it without occasioning the least alarm. All we have been enabled to ascertain is, that a four-wheeled carriage must have been employed by the persons concerned in the affair, as marks of the wheels were visible on the ground, which had been saturated by the late heavy rains; but, at a short distance from the chapel, these marks were lost in the thick sand which here abounds, and further discovery rendered impossible."

"Who could it have been?" murmured Rodin, with a thoughtful air and look; "and what man could possibly have had sufficient interest in the matter to care about carrying off a corpse?"

He then resumed the perusal of the letter.

"Happily the death has been duly and legally attested by a medical officer, whom I summoned from Etampes for the purpose of verifying the decease, etc.; consequently, the fact and individuality of the death of M. François Hardy being regularly established, there can be no difficulty in establishing our rights to all property left by him, as well as to prove ourselves his lawful heirs to any succession that may hereafter arise, he having bestowed on our holy Order all present and future interest in his possessions, lands, or money, to all intents and purposes; but still I deemed it my duty to send immediate information to your reverence of the strange disappearance of the body, in order that you may take what steps may seem best to you, etc."

"D'Aigrigny is right," said Rodin; "the circumstance is in itself more strange than important; yet it demands being well considered and reflected on: it shall be duly weighed and attended to." Turning towards the servant from whom he had received the letter, and who still stood awaiting further orders ere he ventured to quit the room, Rodin said to him, as he gave him the note he had written to Nini-Moulin, "Send this letter immediately according to its address, and desire the person to wait for an answer!"

"I will, father!"

Just as the servant was quitting the room, a reverend father entered, saying to Rodin:

"Father Caboccini from Rome has just arrived, the bearer of a most important message to your reverence from our most reverend general."

At these words the blood of Rodin rushed violently to his heart, but he preserved the most imperturbable calmness, as he merely replied:

"Where is Father Caboccini?"

"In the next room, your reverence!"

"Beg of him to come hither, and then leave us," said Rodin.

The next minute the Reverend Father Caboccini, the envoy from Rome, entered the room, and remained alone with Rodin.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### SET A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF.

The Reverend Father Caboccini, the Roman Jesuit who entered Rodin's apartment, was a little man, thirty years of age at most, plump, rosy, and with stomach which made his black cassock to protrude conspicuously. The worthy small *père* was one-eyed, but his one eye was a piercer; his round visage was joyous and smiling, and splendidly crowned with a thick mass of chestnut hair, curled in tight curls. His manner was cordial even to familiarity, and his free and easy manners harmonised marvellously with his features.

In a second Rodin had analysed the Italian emissary, and as he knew his Company and the customs of Rome to his fingers' end, he experienced momentarily a kind of sinister presentiment at the sight of the worthy little *père* with such courteous manners; he would less have doubted some long and bony reverend father, with austere and sepulchral face, for he knew that the Society endeavoured as much as possible to set aside the suspicions of the curious by the physiognomy and exterior of its agents. If Rodin's forebodings were just, to judge by the cordial greetings of this emissary, he was charged with some very serious and fatal errand.

Mistrusting, attentive, with his eye and mind on the alert, like an old wolf that smells and anticipates an attack or a surprise, Rodin, according to his custom, had slowly and with snake-like movement advanced towards the little one-eyed man, in order to examine him leisurely

and to penetrate accurately beneath his jovial exterior; but the Roman did not give him time, for with a burst of impetuous affection he rushed from the door to Rodin's neck, squeezing him in his arms with the greatest display of affection, embracing him again and again, and then kissing him on both cheeks so vigorously and noisily that his resounding kisses echoed from one end of the apartment to the other.

Rodin had never in his life been thus encountered, and more and more uneasy at the deceit he felt was concealed beneath such warm embraces, moreover bitterly irritated by his depressing presentiments, the French Jesuit made every exertion to get away from the very exaggerated tokens of tenderness of the Romish Jesuit; but the latter held his arm well and firmly. His arms, though short, were very potent, and Rodin was kissed and kissed again by the little roundabout one-eyed priest, until the Italian's strength and wind failed him.

It is useless to say that these excessive huggings were accompanied by the most amicable, affectionate, and fraternal exclamations, all delivered in very good French, but with an Italian accent, excessively broad, and in a *patois* that was very comic.

It will perhaps be remembered that, aware of the dangers which his ambitious machinations might draw down upon him, and knowing from records that the use of poison had often been considered, at Rome, as an affair of state policy, Rodin, rendered suspicious by the arrival of the Cardinal Malipieri, and fiercely attacked by the cholera, yet ignorant that his bitter agony was occasioned by symptoms of the contagion, had exclaimed, as he darted a furious glance at the Romish prelate:

"I am poisoned!"

The same apprehensions came involuntarily to the Jesuit whilst he was endeavouring, by violent and useless efforts, to escape the embraces of his general's emissary, and he said to himself:

"This one-eyed individual is very tender; but is there not the poison of Judas beneath these kisses?"

At length the good little Père Caboccini, quite out of breath, was compelled to let go Rodin's neck, who, adjusting his greasy collar, his cravat, and worn-out waistcoat, which had been outrageously rumpled by the severity of these caresses, said, in a blunt tone:

"Your servant, father — your servant; there's no occasion for so much kissing."

But without replying to this reproach, the good little father, fixing on Rodin his solitary eye with an expression of enthusiasm, and accompanying these words with petulant gestures, said, in his *patois* (impossible to render in translation):

"At length I see this superb light of our holy Society, and can press him to my heart! yes, yes — again and again."

And as the reverend father was fast getting into his second wind, he was about to dash again on Rodin's bosom, when the Frenchman retreated with quickness, extending his arms as if to ward him off, and saying to this remorseless embracer, in allusion to the comparison so illogically made use of by the Père Caboccini:

"Good, good, my father; but we do not squeeze lights against our hearts — even if I were a light, which I am not. I am merely a humble and obscure labourer in the vineyard of the Lord."

The Roman replied, with enthusiasm and emphasis:

"You are right, father; we do not squeeze lights against our hearts, but we prostrate ourselves before them to admire their resplendent, dazzling brilliancy."

And Père Caboccini was about to "suit the action to the word," and going on his knees before Rodin, if the latter had not anticipated this adulatory movement and restrained him by the arm, saying to him impatiently:

"This is a little too like idolatry, father. No more,

no more of me personally, but let us come to the main purpose of your journey — what is that?"

"The purpose, dear father, that purpose fills me with joy, happiness, tenderness. I have endeavoured to testify to you this tenderness by my caresses and embraces, for my heart is in my sleeve; even on my way, my journey, it turned to you — swelled to you, my dear, dear father. This purpose, oh, it transports, it ravishes me! This purpose! Why — it — "

"But this purpose which ravishes you," exclaimed Rodin, exasperated at the exaggerations of southern origin, and interrupting the Roman, "this purpose — what is it?"

"This rescript of our most reverend and most excellent general will instruct you, my very dear father." And Caboccini took from his pocketbook a paper folded and sealed with three seals, which he kissed respectfully before he handed it to Rodin, who took it, and, after having kissed it himself, opened it with extreme anxiety.

Whilst he read it, the Jesuit's features remained impassive, — nothing betokened his internal agitation but a hasty beating of the pulses in his temples.

Then putting the letter calmly into his pocket, Rodin looked at the Roman and said:

"All shall be done as orders our most excellent general."

"Thus, then," exclaimed Père Caboccini, with a revival of enthusiasm and excessive admiration, "it is I who shall be now and hereafter the shadow of your light — your second self; I shall have the happiness of never quitting you day nor night, — of being your *socius*, in a word. Since after having granted to you the faculty of not having one for some time, according to your desire, and in the best interest of the affairs of our holy Company, our most excellent general thinks it fit to send me from Rome to you to fulfil this function: unhoped-for favour — immense — and which fills me with gratitude

for our general, and tenderness for you, my dear and worthy father!"

"This is well acted," thought Rodin, "but I am not to be caught with such chaff; and, besides, it is only in the kingdom of the blind that one-eyed men are kings."

The same evening on which this scene passed between the Jesuit and the new *socius*, Nini-Moulin, after having received Rodin's instructions (in Caboccini's presence), went to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE.

Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, who, at the beginning of this recital, had gone to visit the grounds and Château de Cardoville, with the intention of purchasing this property, had made her fortune by keeping a milliner's shop in the Palais Royal when the allies entered Paris. It was a remarkable house, in which the workwomen were always fresher and handsomer than the bonnets they made and sold. It would be difficult to detail the modes by which this creature had contrived to amass the considerable fortune on which the reverend *pères*, totally regardless of the origin of such property, so that they could pocket it (*ad majorem Dei gloriam*), had cast longing eyes and serious intentions. They had proceeded according to the A B C of their trade. This woman was a weak, vulgar, coarse-minded creature. The reverend fathers managed an introduction to her, and had not overblamed her for her former life. They had even found means of extenuating these peccadilloes, for their moral code is easy and elastic; but they had announced to her that, even as a calf becomes a bull in time, so peccadilloes increase with impenitence; and as they increase with years so they conclude by attaining the proportions of enormous sins; and then, as a fearful punishment of these sins, came the well-timed representation of the devil and his horns, his flames, and pitchforks. In the reverse case, the repression of these peccadilloes would come in good time if assuaged in the

shape of a good and bountiful donation to the Company; the reverend fathers would speedily dismiss Lucifer to his furnaces, and guarantee to Sainte-Colombe (for a good lump of ready money or landed bequest) a prominent berth amongst the elect.

Despite the ordinary efficacy of these means, this conversion presented many difficulties. La Sainte-Colombe, subject from time to time to terrible returns of youthful feelings, had quite worn out two or three spiritual directors. And Nini-Moulin, who really and seriously coveted the fortune and with it (compulsorily) the hand of this creature, had considerably damaged the plans of the right reverends.

At the moment when the religious writer went to La Sainte-Colombe as Rodin's messenger, she occupied an apartment on the first floor in the Rue de Richelieu, for, in spite of her retirement from business, this woman found infinite pleasure in the noisy din and perpetual bustle of a thronged and principal thoroughfare; her apartment was richly furnished, but usually dirty and messy, in spite of, or in consequence of, the care of two or three domestics, with whom La Sainte-Colombe was on terms of decided familiarity or quarrelling like a fury.

We will introduce the reader into the sanctuary in which this creature had been for some time in secret confidence with Nini-Moulin.

The neophyte so much coveted by the right reverend fathers was seated on a mahogany sofa covered with crimson silk. She had two cats on her knees and a spaniel at her feet, whilst a large old gray parrot was moving backwards and forwards at the back of the sofa; a green paroquet, less favoured or not so tame, shrieked out from time to time, chained to a stand placed near the window. The parrot did not cry out, but occasionally interspersed conversation by uttering coarse oaths in a loud voice, or giving out the language of the fish-market or those haunts of vice in which he had passed his youth.

The truth was, that this old pet of La Sainte-Colombe had received from his mistress (before her conversion) his by no means refined education, and had even been christened by her with a very ill-sounding name, for which, however, La Sainte-Colombe, on the abjuration of her early errors, had substituted the modest name of Barnabé.

As to La Sainte-Colombe's portrait, she was a stout woman of about fifty, with a broad, florid face, somewhat bearded, and with a masculine voice. She had on this evening an orange turban and a gown of violet velvet, although it was the end of May. She had, moreover, rings on all her fingers, and around her forehead a *ferronière* of diamonds.

Nini-Moulin had laid aside his paletot-sac, although not very spruce in his ordinary attire, for a suit of black, with a large white waistcoat *à la Robespierre;* his hair lay flattened on his projecting skull, and he had assumed a most devout look, which he believed better suited to his matrimonial schemes and to counterbalance the influence of the Abbé Corbinet than the airs of Roger-Bontems which he had at first affected.

At this moment the religious writer, laying aside his own interest, thought only of succeeding in the delicate mission with which Rodin had charged him, — a mission which, besides, had been offered to him very adroitly by the Jesuit under the most acceptable appearances, and whose aim being as he believed honourable, formed the excuse for means somewhat hazardous.

"Thus," said Nini-Moulin, continuing a conversation begun some time, "she is twenty years old?"

"At most," replied La Sainte-Colombe, who seemed possessed with very great curiosity; "but it is still a great farce what you now tell me, my stout darling." La Sainte-Colombe was, it will be seen, already on a footing of easy familiarity with the religious writer.

"Farce is not quite the proper word, my worthy

friend," replied Nini-Moulin, with a peculiar air; "it is touching — interesting, you should say. For if by to-morrow you could find the person in question —"

"The devil! By to-morrow, my trump?" said La Sainte-Colombe, cavalierly. "How fast you get on! Why it is more than a year since I heard of her! No, no, Antonia, whom I met a month since, told me where she was —"

"But can you not find her out by the means you first thought of?"

"Yes, fat darling; but it is very tiresome to take a great deal of trouble in such a matter when one has left off the habit —"

"What, my charming friend! You so good, you who work so hard for your own salvation, do you hesitate at a little trouble or inconvenience, when it is to effect a very desirable and worthy end — when it is to snatch a young girl from the snares of Satan and all his works?"

Here parrot Barnabé uttered two fearful oaths with perfect articulation.

In her first feeling of indignation La Sainte-Colombe cried, as she turned towards Barnabé with an angry, revolted air:

"This —— (a word quite as coarse as that uttered by Barnabé) will never reform. Will you hold your tongue?" (Here again Barnabé let fly a whole volume of his usual expletives.) "He really does it on purpose. Yesterday he made the Abbé Corbinet blush to his ears. Will you hold your tongue?"

"If you always scold Barnabé in this severe way," said Nini-Moulin, preserving his seriousness to perfection, "you will eventually correct him. But to return to our affair. Come, be what you naturally are, my worthy friend, so excessively obliging — hasten to do an action doubly good. In the first instance to snatch, as I said, a young girl from Satan and his vanities by giving her an honourable position, that is to say, the means of re-

turning to virtue; and then — a thing equally noble — try and restore, perchance, to her senses, a poor mother, gone mad with grief. To effect this very little trouble is required."

"But why this girl more than any other, my dear fellow? Is it because she is a kind of rarity?"

"Assuredly, my worthy friend; and remember, the poor crazy mother, whom they are so desirous to restore to reason, might be (as we hope) recovered at the sight of her child."

"That's true."

"So come, my worthy friend, do make a little effort."

"Go away, you coaxer!" said La Sainte-Colombe, in her most dulcet tone; "one must do all you wish."

"Then," said Nini-Moulin, anxiously, "you promise —"

"I promise — and, more than that, I will go at once, and do all I can; it will be the sooner managed. This evening I shall know enough to decide whether it can be done or not."

So saying, La Sainte-Colombe rose with an effort, deposited her two cats on the sofa, pushed the dog away with her foot, and rang the bell vigorously.

"You are really most kind," said Nini-Moulin, with dignity. "I shall never forget it during my life."

"Don't trouble yourself, my stout friend," said La Sainte-Colombe to the religious writer; "it is not on your account that I have resolved to do this!"

"Then on whose account, or why?" inquired Nini-Moulin.

"Ah, that's my secret!" replied La Sainte-Colombe. Then addressing her *femme de chambre*, who entered:

"My girl, tell Ratisbonne to go and fetch me a coach, and give me my coquelicot velvet hat and feathers."

Whilst the servant was gone to execute her mistress's orders, Nini-Moulin went towards La Sainte-Colombe, and said to her, in a low voice, and with an insinuating and gentle air:

"You will at least remark, my charming friend, that I have not uttered one word about my love this evening. Do you not give me credit for my discretion?"

At this moment La Sainte-Colombe had taken off her turban, and turning around suddenly she put this head-dress on Nini-Moulin's bald pate, laughing loudly as she did so. The religious writer appeared overjoyed with this proof of confidence, and, at the moment when the servant returned with the shawl and hat of her mistress, he kissed the turban passionately, looking askance at La Sainte-Colombe.

The day after this scene, Rodin, whose countenance appeared triumphant, put with his own hands into the post a letter thus addressed:

*To Monsieur Agricola Baudoin,*
*Rue Brise-Miche, No. 2,*
*Paris.*

[*With speed.*]

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### FARINGHEA'S AMOUR.

DJALMA, it may be remembered, when he first learned that he was beloved by Adrienne, had in the excess of his happiness said to Faringhea, whose treachery he had detected:

"You are leagued with my enemies, yet I never did you any ill. You are wicked, because, doubtless, you are unhappy; I would render you happy that you may be good. Would you have gold?—you shall have gold; would you have a friend?—you are a slave, I am a king's son; I offer you my friendship."

Faringhea had refused the gold, and affected to accept the friendship of Kadja-Sing's son. Endowed with singular intelligence and profound dissimulation, the métis had easily persuaded of the sincerity of his repentance, his gratitude, and his attachment, a man of a character so confiding, so generous, as Djalma's; besides, what motive could he have to distrust the slave becoming his friend? Certain of Mlle. de Cardoville's love, with whom he passed every day, he would have been defended by the salutary influence of the young girl against the perfidious counsels or calumnies of the métis, the faithful and secret instrument of Rodin, who had affiliated him to the Company; but Faringhea, whose tact was perfect, did not act without caution. He never spoke to the prince or Mlle. de Cardoville, but discreetly awaited the confidence which the overflowing delight of Djalma sometimes disclosed.

A very few days after Adrienne had fled from the display of Djalma's passion, — the day after that on which Rodin, certain of the success of Nini-Moulin with La Sainte-Colombe, had himself put a letter in the post addressed to Agricola Baudoin, — the métis, who had for some time seemed very gloomy, appeared so dejected that the prince, struck with the appearance of the man in whom he was interested as well from affection as happiness, asked him several times the cause of this overwhelming sorrow; but the métis, whilst he thanked the prince for the interest he evinced with gratitude, preserved the same dispirited air.

This stated, the following scene may be conceived. It took place towards the middle of the day, in a small house in the Rue de Clichy, occupied by the Indian.

Djalma, contrary to his usual custom, had not passed the day with Adrienne, as the day before he had been informed by the young girl that she should ask of him the sacrifice of the whole day, that she might employ it in taking the necessary measures that their union might be blessed and acceptable in the eyes of the world, and yet might remain surrounded by the restrictions which she and Djalma desired; as to the means which Mlle. de Cardoville might employ to attain this result, as to the person, so pure and so honourable, who was to consecrate this union, that was a secret which, belonging only to the young girl, could not yet be confided to Djalma.

As to the Indian, so long accustomed to consecrate every instant to Adrienne, the whole day passed away from her seemed interminable. In turns a prey to burning agitation or a kind of bewilderment, in which he endeavoured to plunge his thoughts to escape those which caused him such overwhelming tortures, Djalma had extended himself on a divan, his face hidden in his hands, as if he desired to escape from a vision that was too tempting. Suddenly Faringhea entered the apartment, without giving a knock on the door as usual.

Djalma, startled at the noise which the métis made as he entered, raised his head and looked about him with surprise, and at the sight of the pale and distressed countenance of the slave he rose suddenly, and advancing towards him exclaimed :

" What ails you, Faringhea ?"

After a moment's silence, and as if yielding to a painful hesitation, Faringhea, throwing himself at Djalma's feet, murmured in a faint voice, and despairing, almost supplicating tone :

" I am very unhappy ; have pity on me, monseigneur."

The accent of the métis was so touching, the great grief he seemed to experience gave his features, ordinarily so impassive and inflexible, such an expression of agony, that Djalma was touched at it, and, bending down to raise the métis, said to him with affection :

" Speak, speak ; confidence soothes the torments of the heart. Have confidence in me ; rely on me. The angel said to me, a few days since, happy Love admits no tears about him."

" But unfortunate love, wretched love, betrayed love, sheds tears of blood," replied Faringhea, with extreme dejection.

" What betrayed love do you allude to?" inquired Djalma, surprised.

" I allude to my own love," replied the métis, with a gloomy air.

" Your love ?" said Djalma, more and more astonished ; not that the métis, who was still young, and had a face of sombre beauty, appeared to him incapable of inspiring or experiencing a tender sentiment, but because he had not believed until then that this man was capable of experiencing so poignant a grief.

" Monseigneur," replied the métis, " you said to me, misfortune has made you wicked, be happy and you will be good. In these words I saw a presage, as if any one had said that, in order for a noble love to enter my

breast, hatred and treachery must quit it. Now I, half a savage, have found a young and lovely female who shared my passion — at least I believed so; but I had been a traitor to you, monseigneur, and for traitors, even if repentant, there is no happiness; and in my turn I have been betrayed — infamously betrayed."

Then, seeing the prince's movement of surprise, the métis added, as if he were overcome with confusion:

"Pray do not jest with me, monseigneur; the most fearful tortures would not have torn this heartrending confession from me; but you, son of a king, have deigned to say to your slave, 'Be my friend.'"

"And that friend thanks you for your confidence," said Djalma, emphatically; "far from jesting, I will console you. Take heart, and do not think I would jest with you."

"Betrayed love merits so much contempt, such insult," said Faringhea, bitterly. "Cowards even have a right to point at you with disdain; in this country, the sight of a man deceived in that which is the soul of his soul, the blood of his blood, the life of his life, makes men shrug their shoulders and burst into derisive laughter."

"But are you certain of this treachery?" replied Djalma; adding, with a degree of hesitation which proved the goodness of his heart, "Listen, and excuse me for speaking to you of the past. Besides, it will prove to you on my part that I do not preserve any bad feeling towards you; and that I believe in the repentance and affection you show me daily. Remember that I also believed that the angel who is now my life did not love me, — yet that was false; who told you that you are not, as I was, abused by false appearances?"

"Alas! monsieur, I would fain believe so, but I dare not hope it; but amid all these perplexities, my brain seems quite turned, and I seem unable to come to any decided conclusion. In my perplexity, therefore, my lord, I venture to beg your advice and kind directions."

"But what has excited your suspicions?"

"The coldness which sometimes succeeds to her most impassioned tenderness; her occasional rejection of my most trifling caress, alleging her 'duties' as the cause; and then —" but, as though withheld by some powerful restraint, the métis did not finish his sentence, but became suddenly silent and thoughtful. After a pause of several minutes he added, "My lord, she reasons too calmly, too dispassionately, when I urge my suit. No, no, all proves too clearly, either that she has never loved me, or that she loves me no longer."

"Nay, I should rather believe in the excess of her regard, if she seeks to elevate the dignity and value of her affection in your eyes."

"That is what they all say," replied the métis, with bitter irony, as he fixed his searching glance on Djalma, "or at least those who love feebly; but the woman whose heart beats with true passion mistrusts not the man she loves; with her, coyness or excess of maiden modesty are not permitted to stand in opposition to the half expressed wish of her lover; to a true mistress the cruel thought could never come, of exciting the passions but for the delight of compelling him to listen to her severe dogmas, her rigid notions. No, no, I say, and I insist that a woman who loves as I would be loved could have no reservations from the object of her affections; and whether the surrender of her life or honour were required of her, at his dear word either or both would be freely given, and that because, in the idolatry of their heart, the wishes of the man they loved would outweigh every consideration, human or divine. But, alas, alas! these women, and above all she who has caused me to endure my present tortures, — these artful beings, whose pride and happiness consist in subduing and conquering man, no matter how proud or impatient of restraint the passive slave may naturally be, — the greater then their triumph in bringing him to their feet. These women, I

say again, who lead a man on, step by step, till the poor victim believes nothing he can ask will be denied,—these women are fiends, who rejoice in the tears of wretchedness of the strong man who loves them with the weakness of a child. And while they are expiring for love at the feet of their obdurate enslavers, these perfidious creatures will just dole out as much love and tenderness as serves to keep alive that passion their vanity would not have extinguished. No, no, they know exactly how far it will be safe and wise to go, that their victim be not driven to utter despair. Oh, how cold, passionless, and weak do these heartless beings appear, compared with the noble generosity of the loving mistress, who, when she reads the wishes of the man of her choice, as expressed in his kindling glances, says to him, with unutterable tenderness: 'Be you happy, O beloved of my heart! And whether shame, sorrow, disgrace, or death overtake me, what care I? My entire existence were well given to spare you a single regret. My life is of less value than one tear from those dear eyes!'"

A slight gloom overspread the forehead of Djalma as he listened to the heated and highly coloured discourse of the mulatto. Having always preserved the strictest silence respecting his passion for Mlle. de Cardoville, the prince could only see in these words an unintentional allusion to the chaste refusals of Adrienne to permit the slightest infringement of the most rigid propriety; yet still the self-love of Djalma felt piqued, as he reflected that Faringhea spoke truly when he said that there were restraints and considerations, duties and observances, which a woman, while professing to have bestowed her heart, allowed to stand between herself and the object of her love. But this unworthy feeling was soon dispelled from the prince's breast, and the sweet image of Adrienne, recovering its wonted influence, put to flight all the sensual and gross-minded arguments of the métis;

the frowning brow resumed its usual calm and open look, and he replied to the mulatto, who was stealthily watching each turn of his expressive countenance, by saying:

"Your uneasiness of mind disturbs your judgment; be assured, if you have no stronger reasons for doubting the fidelity of her you love than vague suspicions and displeasure at her repulsing the ardour of your wishes, that she loves you, — far better, perhaps, than you have ever fancied."

"May your words, my lord, prove those of truth," replied the métis, dejectedly, and as though touched by the words of Djalma; "still I cannot help saying to myself, from time to time, there are evidently objects she prefers to me, — her delicacy, her scruples, her dignity, her honour, are all of superior value than myself; she will not sacrifice one of these personal considerations to my happiness! Well, it matters not! After all these worldly reasons have had their due place, then she can bestow a little thought upon my poor affection."

"My friend, you are paining yourself unnecessarily," said Djalma, mildly, though at the same time a painful feeling shot through his heart at the pertinacity with which the métis reiterated his opinion; "you are wrong; the greater a woman's love the greater is the chaste dignity by which it is guarded, and her very scruples and delicacy are awakened by the sensitiveness of her affection, which influences every word and thought instead of being restrained and governed by worldly motives."

"No doubt my lord is right; and, since this woman imposes on me a certain manner of showing my love, there is nothing left for it but a blind submission — "

Then, suddenly interrupting himself, the mulatto concealed his face in his hands, uttering a heavy groan, while his features expressed a mixture of rage, hatred, and

despair, at once so frightful and yet so sorrowful, that Djalma, pitying him more and more, seized the hand of Faringhea, saying:

"Calm these angry passions, and listen to the voice of friendship, that it may dispel the evil influence which now possesses your mind; speak, say why this fresh burst of anger?"

"No, no; 'tis too dreadful!"

"Speak! nay, I command you, speak!"

"Leave a wretched being like myself to a despair that admits not of cure!"

"Do you think me capable of so doing?" asked Djalma, with a mixture of gentleness and dignity that seemed to produce a lively emotion on the part of the métis.

"Alas!" replied he, still hesitating, "does my lord insist upon it?"

"I do!"

"Well, then, I have not told you all; for, at the moment of confessing the cause of my misery, shame and a dread of ridicule restrained me; but, when you inquired my reasons for believing myself deceived, I spoke of vague suspicions — coldness — reserve — on the part of her I loved, but that was not the entire truth, — this very evening she — the faithless one —"

"Go on — go on!"

"Has appointed a meeting with a favoured lover!"

"How know you that?"

"I learned it from one who, though unknown to me, has seen and pitied my infatuated blindness."

"But how if this should be false, — if this stranger were deceiving you?"

"He has offered me the most incontestable proofs of what he asserts."

"Of what nature are his proofs?"

"He has undertaken to make me an unperceived witness of the meeting of this evening. 'It is possi-

ble,' said he, 'that there may be nothing criminal in the interview, although appearances would indicate the reverse; but judge for yourself,' added the man, 'be courageous enough to do this, and all your cruel doubts and uncertainty will end.'"

"And what reply made you?"

"None whatever, my lord; my brain seemed bewildered then, as it now is, and all I could determine upon was to entreat your advice." Then with a despairing gesture the métis continued, with a look of wildness accompanied with a burst of savage laughter, "Counsel! — advice! why ask them of man when 'tis of the blade of kandjiar I should seek them, and my trusty steel would have replied, 'Blood! blood!'" and with these words the métis convulsively grasped a long poniard he wore in his belt.

There are certain outbreaks of feeling and violence that are fatally contagious as the plague itself.

At the sight of Faringhea's features thus distorted by jealousy and rage, Djalma started, for it brought back to his recollection the remembrance of his own insane fury when the Princesse de Saint-Dizier had defied Adrienne to deny the fact of Agricola Baudoin's being found secreted in her bedchamber, representing him as a favoured lover. But, quickly reassured by the proud and dignified calmness of the noble-minded girl, Djalma's violence had been succeeded by profound contempt for the author of so base a calumny, which Adrienne had not even deigned to take the slightest notice of.

Nevertheless, as the lightning divides and marks the fair face of heaven during a storm, so had the recollection of this unworthy accusation several times occurred with rankling ire to the thoughts of the young Indian, but it had almost as quickly been dispelled by his own confidence in the purity of his beloved, and the smiling consciousness of his well-assured happiness.

These reminiscences, as well as the recollection of

Adrienne's chaste reserve, by rendering Djalma somewhat sad, seemed also to excite in him a greater degree of pity and commiseration for Faringhea than he would otherwise have felt but for this strange and secret similarity between their relative positions; knowing by his own experience to what fearful extremities a blind fury may lead one, and wishing to soften the mind of the métis by kindness and affection, Djalma said to him, in serious though gentle tone:

"I have offered you my friendship, I would fain act towards you according to my words!"

But the mulatto, feigning the most absorbing and deadly fury, continued with fixed and haggard eyes to gaze upon vacancy, as though he heard not the prince, who, finding himself unnoticed, placed his hand lightly on the shoulder of the mulatto, and said:

"Faringhea, hearken to me!"

"My lord," exclaimed the métis, abruptly starting, as though just roused from a deep reverie, "your pardon, but — I — I —"

"In the agony of mind caused by your cruel suspicions, 'tis not of your dagger you should ask counsel or assistance, but of your friend, and have I not already told you that friend is myself?"

"My lord?"

"This rendezvous, which, as you are told, will either prove the guilt or innocence of her you love, — this rendezvous must be watched —"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the métis, in a hoarse tone and menacing look, "it must — it shall! I will be there!"

"But not alone; you go not thither unaccompanied!"

"What does my lord mean?" inquired the mulatto, with an air of perplexity, "whom should I get to accompany me?"

"Your faithful friend, — myself!"

"You, my lord?"

"Yes; it may be to save you from the commission of a crime; for well I know how blind and unjust are our first impulses of anger."

"But," replied Faringhea, with a bitter smile, "'tis our first impulses that serve to avenge us."

"Faringhea, I have the whole of to-day at my disposal, I will not quit you for an instant," said the prince, resolutely; "either you do not attend this meeting, or else I go with you!"

As though conquered by this generous persistence, the mulatto fell at the feet of Djalma and caught his hand, which he carried respectfully first to his forehead, then to his lips, saying:

"My lord must not be generous by halves; he must also grant me his pardon!"

"Pardon? Pardon for what?"

"For having had the boldness to form within my own breast the audacious wish to crave of you the very favour you so graciously offer me! Yes, not knowing whither my blind fury might lead me, I had purposed beseeching of you to accord me a proof of kindness you would probably have refused to an equal; and until it came to the point I durst not, any more than avow the whole extent of the treachery and perfidy I apprehend; and my only motive in seeking you to-day was to tell you I was wretched, because you were the only person in the world to whom I could own my misery."

It is impossible to convey an accurate idea of the almost childlike simplicity and guileless candour with which the métis pronounced these words, or the expressive tone of voice, mingled with tears, which succeeded his late ferocity.

Deeply affected, Djalma, kindly extending his hand, said to him:

"You were entitled to claim a proof of friendship at my hands; and I feel pleased and happy at having thus anticipated your wishes. Come, come, take courage, and

hope for the best. I will bear you company to this meeting; and, if I may trust my own presentiments, you will find that you have been the dupe of false appearances!"

When it was perfectly dark, the métis and Djalma, well concealed amid the folds of their large wrapping-cloaks, ascended a fiacre, which, according to Faringhea's bidding, drove rapidly towards the abode of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### AN EVENING AT MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE'S.

We left Djalma and Faringhea proceeding in a fiacre to the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, but ere we proceed to narrate the particulars of the journey it will be necessary to cast a retrospective glance at some preparatory circumstances. Nini-Moulin, who still continued in absolute ignorance of the real purport of the various steps he took at Rodin's instigation, had gone the preceding evening according to the Jesuit's desire to offer to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe a very considerable sum, in order to induce this person, who still retained an inordinate craving after money, to give up the entire occupation of her apartments for a whole day. La Sainte-Colombe having accepted the proposition, which was far too tempting for one of her sordid, avaricious nature to refuse, had set out at an early hour in the morning with her servants, giving it out that she wished to requite their faithful services by taking them to spend a long day in the country.

Left master of the place, Rodin, with his bald head covered with a black wig, a pair of blue glass spectacles on his nose, wrapped in a cloak, and having the lower part of his countenance buried in a deep white worsted neck-wrapper, — in a word, so completely disguised as to render recognition impossible, — had come at an early hour with Faringhea to survey the apartments and to give the necessary orders to the métis, who, ere the Jesuit had been gone a couple of hours, had by his intelligence

and address made the various and most important preparations, after which he hastily returned home to play the part of detestable hypocrisy to which Djalma was so unsuspecting a victim.

During the drive from the Rue de Clichy to the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, situated in the Rue de Richelieu, Faringhea remained plunged in a deep and painful reverie, which he suddenly broke by saying to Djalma, in a hoarse and abrupt tone:

"If I am betrayed, then, my lord, I must have a fearful vengeance!"

"And what can you have more bitter than contempt? What revenge can be more stingingly terrible than to despise your foe?"

"No, no," continued the métis, with an accent of ill-restrained rage, "no, that suffices not my burning thirst, and the nearer the moment of trial approaches, the more certain do I feel it can only be quenched in blood."

"Hearken to me!"

"My lord, my lord! I beseech you to have pity on me; I confess my former weakness and cowardice; I own that I trembled and drew back at the idea of avenging my wrongs; but now I have bent my mind to the task, and the false-hearted being who has thus destroyed my happiness shall have her full reward. Yes, she shall receive back torture for torture, groan for groan. Ah, my lord, permit me to quit you and to go alone to this meeting."

And with these words Faringhea made a feigned attempt to precipitate himself out of the carriage. Djalma, however, seized him quickly by the arm, saying:

"Remain where you are; I will not leave you; and if you find that you have been betrayed, 'tis not by blood but contempt you shall seek to avenge your wrongs. Turn from the faithless to the faithful, and let friendship console your exasperated feelings."

"No, no, my lord, I am fixed in my deadly design;

when I have slain my foe, then will I kill myself," exclaimed the mulatto, with savage energy. "To the false — perjured wretches who have wronged me do I devote the keen blade of this kandjiar," cried he, clutching the poniard he still wore in his belt; "mine be the poison contained in its sheath!"

"Faringhea!"

"Pardon me, my lord, for presuming to offer the least opposition to your will; but my destiny must be accomplished!"

Time was hurrying on, and Djalma, despairing of being able to calm the ferocious rage of the métis, resolved upon employing a species of artifice.

After a few minutes' silence he said to Faringhea:

"I will not leave you; I will do all in my power to spare you the commission of a crime, and if I fail, let the blood you shed be on your head alone — never again shall my hand be placed in contact with yours!"

These words appeared to produce a lively impression on the mind of Faringhea, who, heaving a deep sigh, let his head drop forwards on his breast, while Djalma prepared by the aid of the feeble light cast into the vehicle from the outside lamps to employ either force or sudden surprise to dispossess the métis of his deadly weapon, when having by an oblique glance discovered the prince's intention, the mulatto suddenly plucked the kandjiar from his belt, then handing it to Djalma, said, in a solemn yet savage voice:

"This dagger is terrible and death-dealing when wielded by a firm and steady hand, but here in this small phial is contained one of the most subtle poisons of our country;" and pushing back a spring concealed in the setting of the kandjiar, the handle lifted half up like a lid, and displayed a small crystal phial hid in the thickness of the hilt of this murderous weapon. "Two or three drops of this poison sprinkled on the lips," continued the métis, "will bring a slow but calm and painless

death, the only symptom being the discloration of the nails, which turn blue at the expiration of a few hours; but he who should drain this small phial of its contents would die on the instant without pain or suffering, falling to the earth as though stricken by a thunderbolt."

"I know," replied Djalma, "that our country produces strange and mysterious poisons; some freezing up by slow degrees the channels; others operating with the instantaneous precision of a cannon-ball; but wherefore should you thus dwell on the destructive properties of this murderous weapon?"

"To prove to you, my lord, that this kandjiar is at once the means of securing my vengeance, and preserving me from the consequences of taking the punishment of my foe into my own hands: with this dagger I slay those who have injured me; with this poison I escape by a speedy death from the justice of men. And yet, though this kandjiar thus forms my sole dependence as regards my revenge, I resign it to you; take it, my lord, I could more easily renounce my hopes of vengeance than risk an act that bars me from the touch of your hand for the rest of my life." And with a look of mingled respect, submission, and heartfelt misery, the métis presented the poniard to the prince.

As much surprised as delighted with this unexpected resolution, Djalma hastily placed the terrible weapon in his girdle, while the métis resumed, in a voice of intense emotion:

"Keep this kandjiar, my lord, and when you have seen and heard what we are about to witness, you shall either give me the poniard and I will strike a guilty and unworthy wretch to the heart, or you shall give me the weapon, and I will die without giving a blow; 'tis for you to command and for me to obey."

As Djalma was about to reply, the carriage stopped at the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, and the prince with the métis, both well wrapped up and con-

cealed in their mantles, entered beneath a sort of gateway, the gates of which immediately closed upon them, when Faringhea, having said a few words in a low tone to the porter, received a key from him.

The two Indians then proceeded direct to one of the doors communicating with Madame de la Sainte-Colombe's apartments, which contained two entrances from the landing-place, and a back staircase that led out to the court below. At the moment when Faringhea was putting the key into the lock, he said to Djalma, in an agitated voice:

"My lord, I pray you to pardon my weakness; but at this fearful moment I tremble, and can scarely resolve to follow up my resolution. Perhaps it would have been better to have remained a prey to my doubts, or to have endeavoured to forget that I had any—"

Then, as the prince was about to speak, the métis exclaimed:

"No, no, let me be firm! A coward they shall not make me;" and opening the door in a hurried manner he entered, followed by Djalma. The door closed; the métis and the prince found themselves in utter darkness in a sort of narrow corridor.

"Give me your hand, my lord, and let me guide you," said the mulatto, in a low tone; "tread lightly," continued he, as he extended his hand to the prince, who took it and proceeded silently and cautiously by his side along the dark passage.

After having made Djalma take a long and circuitous walk, opening and shutting several doors the more effectually to mystify him as to the direction they had gone in, the métis suddenly stopped, and letting drop the prince's hand, which he had continued to hold up to that moment, said, in a low voice:

"My lord, the decisive moment approaches, let us wait here a few instants." A profound silence followed these words.

So great was the darkness that Djalma could discern

nothing, but at the expiration of a few seconds he could hear Faringhea moving away from him, then all at once the noise of a door quickly opened, and then double locked.

This sudden disappearance began to create a feeling of uneasiness in the mind of Djalma. By a mechanical movement he felt for his dagger, and finding it safe in his girdle, commenced a rapid attempt to grope his way towards the spot from whence he imagined the sounds to have proceeded. All at once the voice of the métis struck on the prince's ear, and without its being possible to discover the precise place where the speaker stood, these words were clearly and distinctly heard:

"You bade me be your friend, my lord; I have acted as such, and even employed stratagem to bring you hither. Had I told you the truth, the blind infatuation of your fatal passion would have prevented your following me or listening to my counsel. You have heard from the Princesse de Saint-Dizier of Agricola Baudoin, the favoured lover of Adrienne de Cardoville. Now hearken! behold! and judge for yourself!"

The voice which had seemed to proceed from one of the corners of the room here ceased, leaving Djalma still in utter darkness, and half suffocated with rage at finding, too late, the snare into which he had fallen.

"Faringhea!" exclaimed he, "where am I? Whither have you gone? Answer me on your life! and throw open these doors I have so treacherously been made to enter — I would depart instantly!" And with these words Djalma rushed precipitately forward till he struck against a wall covered with some soft material, like silk or stuff. Eagerly passing his hands over it, in search of some outlet, he at length felt what with joy he recognised as a door, but so firmly secured as to resist all his attempts to force it open. In vain he shook it, the lock refused to give way; and, tired and disheartened, he was compelled to abandon the fruitless effort, and

resume his researches around the chamber. Still groping his way, he came to a fireplace, the fire of which was wholly extinct; then to a second door, equally well secured with the first he had met. In a few seconds he had gone all around the apartment, and found himself again by the fireplace he had before remarked. The prince's uneasiness grew stronger and stronger, and, with a voice tremulous with rage, he called loudly on Faringhea, without receiving any reply; while the most profound silence reigned without, and all within was enveloped in the utmost obscurity. Ere long a sort of perfumed vapour, of indescribable sweetness, but of a most subtle and penetrating kind, began by almost insensible degrees to spread itself throughout the chamber in which Djalma was standing. As the aromatic odour diffused its balmy richness over the senses of the young Indian, it seemed as though it were introduced by means of a tube passed through one of the doors of the chamber. A prey to the many painful and perplexing ideas by which his mind was oppressed, Djalma had at first paid no attention to this circumstance; but many minutes had not elapsed before the arteries of his temples began to beat violently; a burning and fervid heat circulated rapidly in his veins, while a vague and indefinable feeling of happiness stole over him. The angry passions which had so recently animated him seemed to die away by degrees, and to lose themselves in a delicious torpor, which lulled both mind and body to rest and forgetfulness, without his being scarcely conscious himself of the moral transformation he underwent, even in spite of himself.

Still, by a last effort of his fast failing resolution, Djalma hurried forwards, to endeavour once again to open one of the doors he had before so uselessly essayed to force. The object of his search was easily regained, — but at this moment the fragant vapour which pervaded the apartment became so dense and penetrating

that Djalma, unable longer to resist its increased power, felt himself compelled to lean against the wainscot, wholly unable to move from the spot. And now a singular circumstance occurred.[1] A faint light arose in an adjoining chamber, and, gradually increasing revealed to Djalma a sort of window let into the wall, which either gave or received light from the next apartment. On the prince's side this opening was protected by an iron grating, as light as it was solid, without in the least degree obstructing the view; while, on the other side, a thick glass was let into the depth of the wall, but at the distance of two or three inches from the iron grating.

The apartment, seen through this artificial opening, appeared to Djalma, by the faint, uncertain, but soft and pleasing light, to be splendidly furnished. Between the two windows, before which hung elegantly arranged curtains of crimson silk, stood a large wardrobe, the front of which, composed entirely of glass, served admirably to reflect the whole form, as in the largest Psyche mirror. Opposite the fireplace, on which a deep red ash was alone burning, was a long and large divan, on which were piled a heap of luxurious-looking cushions. A second of time had scarcely elapsed when a female entered the apartment. It was impossible to distinguish either her figure or face, so carefully was she wrapped in a large dark mantle, of a particular form and style, the ample hood of which, thrown over the head of the wearer, effectually concealed every feature.

The sight of this mantle made Djalma start; and to the soft dreamy delight in which his senses had been steeped succeeded a feverish restlessness resembling the increasing fumes of intoxication, while his head and

[1] See the strange effects of wambay, a resinous gum, proceeding from a shrub growing in the Himalaya Mountains, — the smoke of which possesses exhilarating properties of extraordinary energy, and infinitely more powerful than that of opium, huchieh, etc. To the singular effect of this gum is attributed the species of hallucination which strikes the brain of the unhappy beings whom the "Prince of the Mountains" (or Old Man of the Mountains) is desirous of employing to carry out his own schemes of vengeance or political mischief.

ears seemed filled with a sort of hollow, booming sound, similar to that experienced by such as plunge into deep water.

Djalma continued to gaze with a sort of stupor on what was passing in the other chamber. The female who had just appeared seemed to enter with a degree of precaution almost amounting to fear; first she put aside one of the curtains, and looked with a timid and inquiring glance into the street; then slowly returned to the fireplace, where, leaning her elbow on the mantelpiece, she remained for a minute pensive and thoughtful, still concealed beneath the dark folds of her cloak. Completely mastered by the overpowering and exhilarating odour which had for the time being affected his brain, Djalma had completely forgotten both Faringhea and the circumstances which had led him to the house; and thus continued to gaze with fascinated glance upon every movement of the strange female thus singularly presented to his view, and whose movements he watched as though she were enacting a part in one of his own dreams.

Suddenly the mysterious female turned away from the fireplace, and approached the large glass-fronted wardrobe. Unfastening the clasp of her mantle, the huge covering fell from her head and whole person, and sunk in a dark mass at her feet.

Djalma remained mute and almost paralysed with amazement. Adrienne de Cardoville stood before him!

Yes; there he believed he saw her as she had looked on the previous evening, dressed precisely as she had been during her interview with the Princesse de Saint-Dizier. There was the light green silk dress, striped with pink, and ornamented with white embroidery. A network of white beads covered the knot of hair at the back of her head, and contrasted beautifully with the golden tint of her rich brown hair; there, too, was, as well as the Indian could make out amid the indistinct light

which faintly glimmered in the room, and through the iron grating which covered the glass, the slight, elegant, nymph-like form of Adrienne; her ivory shoulders; and her proud, yet graceful air, with the fair, rounded, swan-like throat; in a word, there stood Mlle. de Cardoville herself, — it was impossible to doubt her identity, and Djalma entertained not the smallest suspicion of the fact.

Large burning drops of perspiration coursed each other down the beating temples of the astonished prince; his head became dizzy; his brain swarmed with a confused idea of persons and places, as, with bloodshot gaze and heaving breath, he stood motionless, and as though bereft of all power but that of seeing.

The young female, who still stood with her back turned towards Djalma, having arranged her hair with graceful coquetry, took off the pearl netting which confined it, and laid it on the marble mantelpiece. She then appeared as though purposing to unclasp the fastening of her dress, but suddenly quitting her place before the glass, she momentarily disappeared from the eyes of Djalma, in whose ears sounded the following words, which seemed to issue from the wall of the dark chamber in which the prince remained. "She expects Agricola Baudoin, her lover!" said the mysterious speaker, while, spite of the bewilderment of the unhappy Indian, each word, each letter, seemed to burn itself into his brain and heart in characters of fire. A bloodlike mist seemed to float before his eyes — a deep groan burst from his labouring breast, though the thickness of the glass through which he was looking prevented it from being heard in the adjoining chamber, while the frantic lover wounded his hands in fruitless attempts to tear down the iron grating which hindered his rushing to the immediate presence of his perfidious mistress, reproaching her with her falsehood, and dying at her feet.

At this moment of concentrated rage and fury Djalma

observed the light, always pale and uncertain, become still fainter, as though cautiously shrouded by some person within, and then, in the midst of the vapoury gleaming which was so stealthily admitted, he saw the same form he had just lost sight of return, clad in a long and loose white muslin robe, displaying her bare neck and arms, while her long golden hair fell in rich masses down to her waist. The female continued cautiously to advance, as though directing her steps towards some door Djalma was unable to see.

At this moment, one of the entrances to the apartment in which was the prince, and which, like the window he had been gazing through, was made in the same wainscot, was gently and noiselessly opened by an invisible hand, Djalma only becoming aware of the fact by the noise made in turning the lock and the sensation of refreshment from feeling a cooler air blow on his face, for not a glimmer of light was to be seen.

The door thus left open for Djalma communicated (like one of the doors in the adjoining room, where he had seen the female) with an anteroom leading on to the staircase, up which ascending steps were distinctly heard; and, almost immediately, the sound of a person's being on the landing-place was succeeded by two distinct knocks on the outer door, while the same voice which had previously been heard said, in the midst of the darkness which enveloped the prince, "'Tis Agricola Baudoin! Listen — and behold!"

Maddened and intoxicated with blind fury, and a disturbed recollection of what had happened, yet with all the fixedness of idea and pertinacity of purpose peculiar to those whose brain is troubled either from one source or the other, Djalma drew forth the poniard he had received from Faringhea, and awaited, mute and motionless, the result of this second warning.

Scarcely had the two knocks been given than the young girl, coming forth from her chamber, in which a

faint light again streamed out, hastened to the door opening on the staircase, so that sufficient light reached the spot where Djalma had placed himself, weapon in hand, for him to see all that was going on.

Thus he distinctly perceived the female cross the antechamber and approach the entrance to the staircase, saying, in a low tone, as she reached the door:

"Who is there?"

"'Tis I — Agricola Baudoin!" replied a full, manly voice from the outside.

What follows was the work of an instant; the rapidity of thought can scarcely equal its startling impetuosity.

Scarcely had the female withdrawn the fastenings of the door, and the foot of Agricola Baudoin touched the threshold, than, springing forwards like a tiger, Djalma struck (so rapid were his blows) at the same time the unfortunate girl, who fell lifeless at his feet, and Agricola, who, though not mortally wounded, staggered, and fell beside the inanimate form of the ill-fated female.

That scene of murder, rapid in its execution as the quickest flash of lightning, had taken place in a sort of dim light, which enabled Djalma to plant his blows with fatal accuracy; but, all at once, the faint glimmering which had issued from the chamber the female had just quitted was wholly extinguished; and, in another second, Djalma felt his arm seized as in a grasp of iron, while, amid the utter darkness which prevailed, he heard the voice of Faringhea say, "You are revenged! Come — you may retreat in safety!" Bewildered, frenzied, and incapable of resistance, Djalma allowed himself to be drawn by the métis into the inner apartment, from which there were two outlets.

When Rodin, while expatiating on the wonderful combination of ideas in the human brain, had exclaimed that the word necklace had served as the germ of a fiend-like design, of which he then merely and vaguely discerned

the outline, he had by accident stumbled upon the recollection of the too notorious affair of the necklace in which, thanks to the striking resemblance she bore to the ill-fated Marie Antoinette and the being dressed like the queen, a female had, by favour of an imperfect light, so successfully enacted the part of the unfortunate queen that even the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, one of the most experienced courtiers of the day, was deceived by her, and became the dupe of the illusion. His execrable design once decided on, Rodin had despatched Jacques Dumoulin to Madame de la Sainte Colombe, without explaining to him the real import of his errand, which was confined to his inquiring of this experienced individual if she knew of a tall, handsome girl, with a profusion of golden or auburn hair. Such a female found, a costume precisely similar to that worn by Adrienne, the description of which Rodin had obtained from the Princesse de Saint-Dizier (who, it is but justice to say, was perfectly unacquainted with the diabolical scheme), completed the deception.

The rest may be easily imagined. The unfortunate representative of Adrienne had played the part allotted her, believing the whole to be merely a practical jest.

As for Agricola, his appearance may be accounted for by saying he had received a letter, praying him to attend, at a certain place and hour, when matters of the utmost consequence to Mlle. de Cardoville would be revealed to him.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE NUPTIAL COUCH.

A SOFT light issuing from a spherical lamp of Oriental alabaster gently illumined the sleeping apartment of Mlle. de Cardoville, displaying a large ivory bedstead, delicately inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A snow-white mass of transparent muslin and Valenciennes lace hung, in graceful folds, around the bed, which had not as yet been occupied. On the mantelpiece, of purest white marble, was placed, as usual, a large vase filled with fresh-gathered camelias, whose waxen flowers contrasted beautifully with the bright green foliage. The glowing embers that lingered on the hearth cast a rich red glow on the snow-white ermine carpet that covered the floor.

A sweet odour filled the chamber, proceeding from the adjoining bath-room, in which Adrienne's accustomed bath of perfumed water had been prepared according to evening custom. All was peaceful tranquillity within and without. Eleven o'clock in the evening had scarcely struck from the silvery pendule that proclaimed the hour to the graceful mistress of this elegant chamber, when the ivory doors opposite to those conducting to the bath-room slowly opened, and Djalma appeared. Two hours had elapsed since his commission of the double murder recorded in the last chapter, and he fully imagined he had sacrificed Adrienne to his jealous fury. The household of Mlle. de Cardoville, accustomed to Djalma's daily visits, had long since ceased to announce him, and, not having received any contrary orders from

their mistress, who was at that moment engaged in one of the salons on the ground floor, felt no surprise at the sight of the Indian.

Never before had the prince presumed to enter the sacred precincts of this apartment, but, aware of its locality, he doubted not of being enabled to find it. As Djalma entered the apartment, his features were calm and composed, owing to the powerful effort he was making over himself. The only perceptible difference in his appearance might be found in the paleness which had dimmed the rich amber of his complexion. He wore a robe of purple cashmere striped with silver, so that the blood which had sprinkled him as he plunged his dagger into his supposed rival and false mistress showed not its hideous stains.

Closing the door firmly, yet noiselessly, Djalma threw from him his turban, for it seemed as though a band of burning fire encircled his head. His raven locks hung around his pale but handsome countenance, and, folding his arms, he looked slowly around him. As his eyes rested on the bed of Adrienne, he appeared as though intending to approach it, then, suddenly stopping short, a convulsive shudder shook his frame. He passed his hand across his brows, let his head droop forwards on his breast, and remained for several moments thoughtful and motionless as a statue. After resting for some time in this attitude of deep contemplation, his thoughts took another turn, and, throwing himself on his knees, the prince seemed engaged in deep and earnest supplication; his features, bathed in tears, betrayed no violent passion. Neither hatred, despair, nor savage exultation were there to be seen. On the contrary, the predominating expression was that of acute and unaffected grief.

For several minutes tears and sobs prevented his utterance, but at length he articulated, in an agonised tone:

"Dead, dead! She who this morning reposed so peace-

fully in this very chamber! And I am her murderer! By what right did I take her life? Alas! perjured as she was, 'twas not my hand should have punished her. True, she loved another, and that other has paid for his presumption with his life. But was it her fault that she preferred my rival? No, no, it was rather mine that knew not better how to win her affections," added he, with an air of humility, that expressed also the deepest distress and remorse. "But how could I, a poor, untaught, uncivilised being, hope to gain a heart like hers? Alas! she tried to love me, but unable to requite my passion, her generous nature, unwilling to cause pain, feigned a regard she felt not, concealed her real indifference, and affected a love I was unworthy to create; and this, this she did to save me from anguish — from utter despair! And for this I killed her! Yet how nobly had she received me, a poor, shipwrecked wanderer! Did she not herself come to welcome me to her country, throw open her doors for my reception, and permit me to pass my days in her delightful society? She did — she did, and how have I requited all this goodness? What crime had she committed that my hand, covered as it was with her benefits, should have plunged a dagger in her breast? She would have returned my love, but could not compel her heart to surrender itself to one who, though idolising her beyond all earthly beings, yet came not up to the standard of excellence which alone could satisfy a mind such as she possessed; and for this involuntary offence on her part to take her life! I know not what demon urged me on. I seemed mad; but scarcely was the dreadful deed completed, than I seemed to wake as from a fearful dream; but, alas! it is no imaginary crime I have committed. She whom I so tenderly, adoringly loved and worshipped has died by my hand! And up to this wretched evening what ineffable bliss have I not enjoyed, when, seated by her side, I have revelled in long vistas of joyful years and unfading happiness!

She, too, with untiring goodness, had laboured to clear away the errors from my darkened soul, and fill it with sentiments noble and generous as those which inspired her. That at least remains," added the Indian, bursting into renewed sobs; "that blessed treasure, her own pure gift, can never be taken from me. No; this jewel of the past is all my own — no one can bereave me of that — it must henceforth be my consolation. But why do I speak of being consoled? Have I not murdered two defenceless beings — cowardly and basely slain them — without even affording them the means of defending their lives? I rushed on my unresisting victims with the savage fury of a tiger, who seizes and tears the innocent as ferociously as the guilty!"

Djalma could proceed no further. He pressed his hands to his forehead with convulsive energy. Then mastering his emotion, he said, in a voice of calmness:

"I know that I, too, must die, even as she has died; but, alas! my death will not restore her to life!" And feebly rising, Djalma drew from his belt the blood-stained poniard of Faringhea, opened the handle and took from it the crystal phial which contained the poison, then threw from him the poniard, which, as it fell on the ermine carpet, spotted its snowy whiteness with the sanguinary moisture still remaining on the bright steel.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Djalma, tightly grasping the phial in his hand; "I, too, must die! 'Tis fit and right it should be so! Blood for blood! and my death shall avenge hers! How was it that the dagger I plunged into her heart was not turned back upon my own breast? I know not. I know but this, that she is dead, and by my hand! All that is left me is to utter my dying expressions of anguish, remorse, and unutterable affection; and then, in this holy temple, of which she was the pure, the bright, the presiding goddess, to offer up my own life in atonement. Yes," continued he, "in

this dear chamber, sanctified as it has been by her presence!"

Then again relapsing into an agony of grief, and burying his face in his hands, he exclaimed, "Dead, dead!" After some minutes he succeeded in subduing the violence of his feelings, and added, in a firm, calm tone, "Well, well; death is my only refuge! Nor need I linger long. But no; the poison I hold may be rendered either instantaneous or slow and gradual in its effects. So Faringhea informed me; for those who would die by imperceptible approaches of its fatal influence, a few drops only are needful. Then be such my death! Once assured of quitting this wretched existence, I would fain live over, in my thoughts, all the enchanting hours I have passed with her. Alas, alas! who would have thought, when we parted yesterday, so full of hope and fond affection, that this night would have witnessed —"

So saying, the prince raised the phial to his lips, and, having swallowed several drops of the fluid it contained, placed it on a small ivory table that stood beside the bed of Adrienne.

"This poison," said he, "is of a burning, acrid taste. I am now sure of death. Let me, then, feast my senses by gazing on this chamber and inhaling its sweet perfume, and then let me rest my dying head on the same pillow on which hers has so often reposed." And thus saying, Djalma sunk on his knees before the bed, pressing his burning forehead on its delicate covering.

At this moment the ivory door which communicated with the bath-room turned softly on its hinges, and Adrienne appeared, having just dismissed her attendants, after they had waited upon her toilet duties. She wore a long, white muslin dressing-gown; her hair, arranged for the night in a quantity of small plaits, formed two large bandeaux, which imparted to her lovely countenance an air of girlish simplicity, while the delicate fairness of her complexion was becomingly heightened by

the action of the perfumed tepid bath she was accustomed to plunge in before retiring to rest. Nothing could be more resplendently beautiful than the whole appearance of Adrienne, as she opened the ivory door, and placed her small and exquisitely moulded foot, thrust hastily in a slipper of white satin, upon the ermine carpet. Happiness sparkled in her eyes, and diffused itself over her air, her step, her every movement. She had overcome every difficulty as to the mode in which she desired to solemnise her marriage. All was arranged, and in two days Djalma and herself would pronounce their mutual vows; and the very thoughts of the nearness of the time when Djalma too would rank as possessor of the luxurious apartment she had destined for their nuptial chamber brought a richer glow to her cheek. The ivory door had opened so noiselessly and the steps of Adrienne fell so soundlessly on the soft fur of the carpet that Djalma, who still remained with his head pressed on the muslin draperies of the bed, had not heard her approach. But suddenly a mingled cry of terror and surprise struck on his ear. He turned abruptly around and beheld Adrienne. By an involuntary impulse the startled girl, wrapping her muslin robe more closely around her, withdrew several steps, feeling more of sorrow than anger at finding Djalma. Believing that he had been induced, during some wild burst of passion, to seek her in her chamber, she experienced extreme regret at conduct so unworthy both of him and herself, and was just about to bid him depart in a tone and manner that should express the pain his unwarrantable intrusion caused her, when she perceived the sheathless and sanguinary dagger lying almost at her feet.

At the sight of the weapon and the expression of almost stupefaction and terror which overspread the features of Djalma, who, still kneeling, continued to gaze on her in fixed amazement with eyes dilated and

arms outstretched, as though unable to believe even what he beheld, dismissing all idea of the prince's presence having originated in the motive she first assigned to it, Adrienne now felt a species of terror thrill through her veins; a dread of evil was uppermost in her thoughts, and instead of retreating from the prince she advanced towards him, saying, in an agitated voice, as she pointed to the kandjiar:

"Why are you here, prince? What has befallen you? And wherefore this dagger?"

But Djalma replied not, the presence of Adrienne had at first seemed to him the creation of a brain already disturbed and acted upon by the effects of the poison.

But when the soft voice of Adrienne reached his ear, when the sudden beating of his heart announced the sort of electric shock he experienced in now meeting the glance of her he so passionately adored, when he had contemplated that lovely face so bright, so glowingly fresh and purely innocent, tranquil even amid the extreme uneasiness she endured, Djalma perceived that he was not under the influence of a dream or vision, but that the object of his heart's devotion was there before his eyes in living loveliness.

Then, as by degrees he became more and more convinced of the identity of the figure before him with the being he had so deeply mourned; as the full delight rolled over his mind that Adrienne still existed, though wholly unable to comprehend or explain the wonder by which she was thus restored to life, the whole countenance of the Indian underwent a change; the pale, golden tint of his complexion became bright and glowing; his eyes, dimmed by remorse and tears, were again radiant with joy, while his features, so lately contracted by terror and despair, expressed every alternation of a delight that was almost the delirium of happiness, too great for mortal to endure.

Approaching Adrienne in his kneeling attitude, and extending to her his supplicating hands, too deeply affected to be able to utter a word, he gazed on her with so much astonishment, passionate tenderness, and intense gratitude, to find she still lived, that the object of his mute regard, terrified by his looks and warned also by the forebodings of her own heart, concluded with indescribable fear that some dreadful mystery lurked beneath all this.

At length Djalma, clasping his hands, exclaimed, in accents impossible to describe:

"You live? You did not then die as I thought?"

"Die?" exclaimed the bewildered girl, "what mean you?"

"Then 'twas not you I slew; thanks, thanks, to that great and good Providence that preserved you!" And in the ecstasy of this idea the unhappy prince forgot the ill-fated victim who had perished by his hand.

More and more terrified, and again directing her looks to the dagger which lay on the ground, Mlle. de Cardoville for the first time perceived it was covered with blood, — a discovery which afforded a dreadful confirmation of the words of Djalma. Almost frantically she exclaimed:

"My God! What is all this? Djalma, speak, tell me — whom have you killed? Clear up this horrible mystery, or you will drive me mad!"

"You live — I see you," replied Djalma, in a voice of mingled rapture and exultation; "yes, I have you before my eyes, lovely, pure, and spotless as ever. No, no, 'twas not you; I knew it could not have been, or the dagger raised against your life would have refused to harm you, and been plunged in my own breast."

"For the love of heaven," cried Adrienne, holding up her hands, in earnest supplication, "explain all this if you would not see me die before you! What has oc-

curred? Whom is it you have killed, and wherefore commit so horrible a deed?"

"I know not, but 'twas some female, who greatly resembled you, and there was a man also — her lover — but it was a dream — a vision of my heated brain — for, do I not behold you — and you yet mine — faithful and pure-minded as ever? Oh, yes, oh, yes, and my happiness cannot be told in words!" And again sobs of ecstatic joy interrupted the speech of the young Indian.

"No, no, 'tis no dream!" exclaimed the terrified girl, pointing with frenzied eagerness to the blood-stained kandjiar. "There is blood on this dagger — tell me, Djalma, I charge you by our love, explain the cause of this murderous weapon lying here, and why its blade bears these dreadful marks!"

"I threw the poniard there just now, when I took the poison, fancying I had killed you."

"Poison!" shrieked Adrienne, as her teeth almost rattled against each other with horror. "What poison?"

"I believed I had murdered you, and my only desire was to come here and offer up my own life as an atonement. I came hither to die."

"To die? What do I hear? Merciful God, what can this mean? Wherefore would you die? For whom — for what?" exclaimed the almost frantic girl.

"I meant to take my own life," replied Djalma, with a look of ineffable tenderness, "even as I believed I had taken yours; for that purpose I swallowed poison!"

"You!" exclaimed Adrienne, becoming paler than the whitest marble. "You poisoned?"

"Even as I have told you."

"You do not — you cannot mean what you say," cried the horror-struck girl, as though her mind could not entertain so dreadful an idea. "You are deceiving me!"

"Behold!" said the Indian, mechanically turning his

head towards the little ivory table on which sparkled the crystal phial.

By an impulse more rapid than thought itself, and almost superseding the power of volition, Adrienne flew to the table, seized the phial, and carried it to her lips.

Djalma had hitherto continued kneeling, but as his eyes followed the movements of the half frantic girl, he suddenly sprang up with one bound, and, overtaking Adrienne, tore from her grasp the phial she contrived to hold for a second or two to her eager lips.

"'Tis done!" exclaimed Adrienne, with a gloomy and triumphant smile. "I, too, have drunk of this deadly draught."

A fearful silence reigned for several minutes while the wretched pair gazed in each other's faces in mute, motionless, and blank despair.

This gloomy pause was at length broken by Adrienne, who said, in a broken and agitated voice she vainly strove to render firm and collected:

"After all, there is nothing very extraordinary in what has occurred. You have taken away life, and you wished to expiate your crime by your death, — that is but just; and I will not survive you, — that is only natural. But why do you gaze on me so intently? Tell me, dearest Djalma, is the poison we have taken as prompt in its effects as it is burning and acrid to the taste?"

But the prince replied not, with a universal shudder he looked at his hands.

Faringhea had said truly, a slight tinge of violent colour already stained the polished nails of the young Indian, showing that a slow, painless, almost imperceptible, but sure death was approaching.

Overwhelmed with despair at the thoughts of Adrienne's approaching end, Djalma felt his courage forsake him, he groaned heavily and covered his face with his hands, his knees failed to support him, and he sank on the bed beside which he was standing.

"So soon?" exclaimed the distracted and horror-stricken girl, as she threw herself on her knees at Djalma's feet, "dead already? Oh, why do you hide your face from me?"

And in her extreme terror she eagerly pulled away the hands of the Indian, and beheld his features streaming with tears.

"No, no!" replied he, amid his choking sobs, "no, death has not yet arrived, its progress is slow; the effect of this poison is gradual, though certain."

"Are you quite sure of that?" exclaimed Adrienne, with indescribable joy; then kissing the hands of Djalma with extreme tenderness, she added, "Then, since this poison is slow, why do you weep?"

"For you — for you!" said the Indian, in distracting tones.

"Think not of me," replied Adrienne, resolutely. "You have committed a fearful crime, which we shall expiate by our mutual deaths. I know not what has happened, but this I swear to you, by our fond loves, that you had no wrong to revenge. My heart was all your own; some horrible mystery is contained in this affair."

"Under a pretext so plausible that I could not refuse to credit it," replied Djalma, in a rapid and broken voice, "Faringhea succeeded in inducing me to enter a house, and when we were there he told me you had deceived me. I did not at first believe him, but afterwards a sort of confusion of ideas came over me, and directly afterwards I saw amid a sort of doubtful light yourself!"

"Me?"

"No, not you, but a female who resembled you greatly, and who was dressed precisely as I had last seen you; and my brain seemed to turn around; my recollections and ideas were no longer clear or distinct, and I fancied all I saw was reality. Then a man came, you

(as I fancied) ran to meet him, and I, mad with jealous rage, struck both the man and woman to the ground. I saw them both fall! Then the idea occurred to me of coming hither to die, and in so doing I found you again, — found you to be the cause of your death. Oh, grief, grief, too great to bear; to think that you should lose your life through me!"

And here Djalma, hitherto gifted with so remarkable an energy, burst afresh into tears and sobs, with all the weakness of a child.

At the sight of this deep and impassioned despair, Adrienne, filled with that admirable courage women alone possess where their fondest affections are concerned, forgot her own wretchedness, and thought only of consoling Djalma by an effort of almost superhuman passion. As the devoted girl listened to this account, which so clearly proved the fiendish plots that had been formed against their happiness, the countenance of Adrienne became so radiant with tenderness, love, and exulting happiness, that Djalma gazed on her with fear and wonder, dreading lest her brain were affected, and that she had lost her reason.

"No more tears, my adored one," exclaimed the young girl, radiant with happiness; "no more tears, but smiles of joy and love; be assured our fierce enemies shall not triumph over us!"

"What do you mean?"

"They would render us wretched; let us pity them, for our happiness shall be the envy of the world."

"Adrienne, calm yourself!"

"I am calm — I am rational. Listen to me, dearest; now I understand all. Falling into the snare which these wretches have spread for you, you have killed! In this country this is a murder; and that is infamy or the scaffold; and to-morrow, or even this very night, you would have been thrown into prison, and thus our enemies have said, 'A man like Prince Djalma will not

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await infamy on the scaffold, but will kill himself; a woman like Adrienne de Cardoville will not survive the infamy or death of her lover, she will kill herself or die of despair. Thus a fearful death for him, a fearful death for her, — and for us,' as these black-gowned men have said, 'the enormous inheritance we covet.'"

"But for you, so young, so lovely, so pure, death is terrible; and these monsters triumph!" exclaimed Djalma. "They will have spoken the truth."

"They will have lied," cried Adrienne; "our death shall be celestial, glorious, for this poison is slow, and, Djalma, I love you!"

And as Adrienne said this, she approached so closely to Djalma that their breath mingled.

At this the Indian started, and a devouring flame lighted up his countenance, his blood boiled in his veins. He forgot all, — his despair, his approaching death, — and his features, like those of Adrienne, were resplendent with beauty.

"Oh, how I love you, my adored husband!" said Adrienne. "How often have the thoughts of you almost bereft me of reason, whilst awaiting the moment when I should be yours, and yours only! You see Heaven decrees that I should be yours, and yours only, and nothing can now divide us, for, this very morning, the holy man who was in two days to have blessed our union has received from me a royal gift, which must for ever put joy in the hearts and faces of many unfortunate creatures. What, then, can we regret? Our immortal souls will exhale in our sighs of mutual love, and mount to that adorable God who is all love."

"Adrienne! —"

"Djalma! —"

Two hours after this, Adrienne and Djalma breathed their last sigh in each other's arms.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A RENCONTRE.

ADRIENNE and Djalma died on the thirtieth of May.

The following scene occurred on the thirty-first of the same month, on the eve of the day appointed for the final meeting of the heirs of Marius de Rennepont.

It will no doubt be remembered that the apartments which M. Hardy had occupied in the *maison de retraite* of the right reverend fathers in the Rue de Vangirard were sombre and isolated, the remotest chamber having access to a small garden planted with yews, and surrounded with lofty walls. To arrive at this farther room it was requisite to traverse two large apartments, whose doors, when closed, prevented all noise from being heard as well as all communication from without.

During the last two or three days Père d'Aigrigny had occupied this apartment. He had not selected it, but had been induced to remain there after certain plausible reasons which the reverend *père* the steward had advanced on the instigation of Rodin.

It was about noon.

Père d'Aigrigny, seated in an armchair near the glass door which looked into the dull little garden, was reading the following in a Paris newspaper:

"Eleven o'clock P.M. An event, as horrible as tragical, has thrown alarm throughout the whole of the Quartier Richelieu. A double assassination has been committed on a young girl and a young artisan. The young girl was killed by the blow of a dagger, but it is hoped that

the young artisan will be saved. This crime is attributed to jealousy. Justice has taken cognisance of the facts. Particulars to-morrow."

After having read this, Père d'Aigrigny threw the journal on the table, and meditated deeply.

"It is incredible!" he said, with bitter envy, as he thought of Rodin; "yet he has reached the desired goal; scarcely one of his anticipations has failed. This family has been destroyed by merely playing with their passions, good or bad, which he has artfully called into motion. He said so! Yes, I confess it," added Père d'Aigrigny, with a jealous and hateful smile. "Père Rodin is a dissembling, crafty, patient, energetic, opinionated, and wonderfully intelligent being. Who would have said, some months since, when he was writing under my orders, a humble and discreet *socius*, that this man had already and for so long a time possessed the most daring, most unbounded ambition; that he dared to throw his eyes even to the holy seat; and that by intrigues, marvellously plotted, and corruption, followed up with wonderful skill, in the very heart of the holy college, this aim was not unreasonable; and that, perhaps soon, this hellish ambition might have been gratified, had not the secret workings of this wonderfully dangerous man been watched unknown to him, as I have now learnt. Ah!" continued Père d'Aigrigny, with a smile of bitter but exulting irony; "ah, you foul being! you would have played Sixtus Quintus, eh? And, not content with this bold daring, you would, had you been successful, have annulled, absorbed our Company into your papacy, as the Sultan has absorbed the janissaries. Ah, were men but your ambitious footstool! Oh, you have bent, humiliated, crushed me beneath your insolent disdain! Patience!" added D'Aigrigny, with repressed joy. "Patience! the day of retribution is at hand; I alone am the depositary of the will of our general. Père Caboccini, sent here as a *socius*, is himself ignorant of

it. Thus, then, the fate of Père Rodin is in my hands, and he little anticipates what is in store for him. In this Rennepont affair, which he has so admirably handled, I recognise him; he thinks to surpass us, and that he has succeeded for himself alone, but to-morrow —"

Père d'Aigrigny was suddenly aroused from these agreeable reflections by hearing the doors, which led to the apartment in which he was, open. At the instant when he turned his head to see who entered, the door opened. He made a gesture of surprise, and turned very red.

The Maréchal Simon was before him.

And behind him in the shade D'Aigrigny saw the cadaverous countenance of Rodin, who, having cast on D'Aigrigny a look full of fiendish joy, suddenly disappeared; and the door shutting, D'Aigrigny and Maréchal Simon were alone.

The father of Rose and Blanche was not recognisable; his gray hair had turned perfectly white; on his pale, marble, wan cheeks was a rugged beard unshaven for many days; his eyes, hollow, red, glaring, and restless, were savage and haggard; he was wrapped in a large cloak, with his black cravat carelessly tied around his throat.

Rodin, as he quitted the room, had (inadvertently) double-locked the door.

When he was alone with the Jesuit, the maréchal suddenly let fall his cloak from his shoulders, and Père d'Aigrigny saw in a silk handkerchief, which served the father of Rose and Blanche as a belt, two swords, bare and keen-edged.

D'Aigrigny instantly comprehended all.

He remembered that a few days before Rodin had obstinately inquired what he would do if the maréchal struck him on the cheek. He no longer doubted; and the Père d'Aigrigny, who believed that he held in his hands the destiny of Rodin, was now ensnared, and left

by him without possibility of escape, for he knew that the two other rooms were shut up, and that there was no possibility of making himself heard without by any cries for help, as the high walls of the garden were surrounded by waste grounds.

His first thought — and by no means improbable — was, that Rodin, either by his agents at Rome or by his subtle penetration, having discovered that his fate was about to depend entirely on D'Aigrigny, hoped to get rid of him by thus handing him over to the inexorable vengeance of the father of Rose and Blanche.

The maréchal, still keeping silence, unfastened the handkerchief that served him as a belt, laid the two swords on a table, and, crossing his arms over his chest, advanced slowly towards the Père d'Aigrigny.

Thus were they face to face, — those two men, who, during all their lives as soldiers, had pursued each other with implacable hatred, and who, after having fought in opposite camps, had already met in a fierce and sanguinary duel; these two men, one of whom had come now to the other to call him to account for the death of his children.

On the maréchal's approach Père d'Aigrigny rose. He wore a black cassock, which made him look still paler, as the redness at first caused fled from his cheeks.

For some seconds these two men were standing erect face to face, neither uttering a word.

The maréchal was fearful in his paternal despair; his calmness, as inexorable as fate, was more terrible than the fiercest outbursts of anger.

"My children are dead," he said at length to the Jesuit, in a slow, hollow voice, and first breaking silence, "and I must kill you!"

"Sir," cried D'Aigrigny, "listen to me; do not believe —"

"I must kill you," repeated the maréchal, interrupting the Jesuit; "your hate pursued my wife to exile, where

she perished; you and your accomplices sent my children to a certain death. For twenty years you have been my evil demon; it is enough, I seek your life, and I will have it."

"My life belongs first to God," replied D'Aigrigny, piously, "and afterwards to him who seeks to take it."

"We will fight to death in this chamber," said the maréchal; "and as I have to avenge my wife and children, I am calm, you see."

"Sir," replied Père d'Aigrigny, calmly, "you forget that my profession prevents me from fighting. Formerly I could have accepted the duel you offer, but now my position has altered."

"Ah," inquired the maréchal, with a sneer, "you refuse to fight now because you are a priest?"

"Yes, sir, because I am a priest."

"So, then, because a scoundrel as you are is a priest he is certain of impunity, and he may cover his cowardice and crimes with his black gown?"

"I do not understand one word of your accusation, sir. Under any circumstances you have the law to resort to," added D'Aigrigny, biting his lips, pale with rage, for he felt deeply the insult which the maréchal had addressed to him; "if you have any cause of complaint address yourself to justice, it is impartial to all."

Maréchal Simon shrugged his shoulders with fierce disdain.

"Your crimes escape the law; and if I did not punish them the world would not avenge me. After all the ill you have done me, — after all you have snatched from me —" and at the remembrance of his children the maréchal's voice faltered, but he soon resumed his original calmness; "you must see that I live for vengeance only, and a vengeance in which I can glory, when I feel your cowardly heart beating at my sword's point. Our last duel was but child's play, but this — you will see — you will see!"

And the maréchal went towards the table whereupon he had deposited the swords.

Père d'Aigrigny required all his self-control to restrain himself. The implacable hatred he had always felt towards Maréchal Simon, his insulting provocations, aroused within him a thousand fierce sentiments, yet still he maintained a command over himself as he answered:

"For the last time, sir, I repeat that the character with which I am invested prevents me from fighting you."

"Then you refuse?" said the maréchal, turning around, and advancing towards him.

"I refuse."

"Positively?"

"Positively; nothing shall force me."

"Nothing?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"We shall see," said the maréchal.

And his hand slapped D'Aigrigny full on the cheek.

The Jesuit uttered a cry of rage. All his blood mounted to his face so rudely buffeted. All his courage — for he was a brave man — was recalled; his old soldierly valour revived in spite of himself, and, with clenched teeth, clasped hands, he started violently, and exclaimed, "The swords, the swords!"

But he suddenly remembered Rodin's appearance and the deep interest he had in inducing this rencontre, and he extracted from his desire to escape the diabolical snare, laid for him by his former *socius*, the courage to restrain his burning resentment.

To the momentary excitement of Père d'Aigrigny there suddenly succeeded a calm filled with regret; and, desirous of playing his part to the end, he went on his knees, and, bowing his head, struck his breast with an air of contrition, saying, "Forgive me, Lord, for having given way to an impulse of anger, and, above all, forgive him who has outraged me."

In spite of his apparent resignation, the Jesuit's voice was deeply affected; he seemed to feel a fever in his cheeks; for the first time in his life — his life, as soldier or priest — he had undergone such an insult. He had thrown himself on his knees, as much from mummery as in order to avoid the look of the maréchal, fearing if he encountered it that he might not be able to answer for himself, but should give way to his impetuosity and resentment.

When the maréchal saw the Jesuit fall on his knees, and heard his invocation, he shook with indignation, and, grasping one of the swords in his hand, cried:

"Rise, hypocrite, scoundrel! Rise instantly!"

And the maréchal pushed the Jesuit violently with the toe of his boot.

At this fresh insult the Père d'Aigrigny sprung up as if moved by a steel spring. This was too much, and beyond all endurance. Excited, blind with rage, he rushed to the table on which the other sword was, and exclaimed, as he ground his teeth:

"Ah, you require blood! Well, blood — and your own, if so I may —"

And the Jesuit, in all the vigour of manhood, his face purple with passion, his large eyes sparkling with hate, placed himself on guard with the skill and ease of a practised swordsman.

"At last!" exclaimed the maréchal, preparing to cross swords.

But reflection came again to calm the headlong rage of D'Aigrigny. He remembered, again, that the chances of the duel would be everything for Rodin, whose destiny he held in his hands, and whom he, in his turn, should now overwhelm; and whom he detested perhaps even still more than the maréchal, although he felt within himself a secret hope of being the victor in this combat, for he felt himself full of strength and health, whilst heavy griefs had borne down the Maréchal Simon.

The Jesuit grew calm, and, to the great amazement of the maréchal, lowered the point of his sword, saying:

"I am a minister of the Lord, and ought not to shed blood. Once, again, forgive my excitement, Lord, and forgive also my brother who hath stirred up my wrath."

Then instantly placing the blade of the sword beneath his heel, he bent it up suddenly towards him, so that the weapon was broken in two pieces. There was thus no further possibility of a duel.

Père d'Aigrigny had rendered himself powerless to yield to fresh violence, to whose imminence and danger he was fully alive. Maréchal Simon remained for a moment mute and motionless with surprise and indignation, for he also saw at once the impossibility of the duel; but suddenly, in imitation of the Jesuit, the maréchal placed the blade of his weapon beneath his heel, and breaking it nearly in equal halves took up the pointed end, about eighteen inches long, took off his black silk cravat, rolled it around the fragment towards the broken end, and having thus suddenly armed himself with a dagger, he said to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Now then for poniards!"

Aghast at such coolness and such determination, Père d'Aigrigny exclaimed:

"This is a suggestion of hell itself!"

"No, it is but a father whose children have been murdered," said the maréchal, in a gloomy tone, and clutching the dagger more firmly in his hand, whilst a tear trickled to his eyes, which in an instant became again fierce and glaring.

The Jesuit saw the tear. There was in this mixture of vindictive hatred and paternal grief something so terrible, so sacred, and so menacing, that for the first time in his life D'Aigrigny experienced a sensation of fear — base, cowardly fear — fear for his life. Whilst it was only a question of a duel with swords, in which stratagem, skill, and experience are such powerful aux-

iliaries of courage, he had but to repress the impulses of his fury and hate; but before this encounter of body to body, heart to heart, he trembled for a moment, turned pale, and cried, "A butchery with knives! Never!"

The accents, the countenance of the Jesuit betrayed his feelings, his alarm, so decidedly, that the maréchal was struck by it, and he exclaimed with agony, dreading lest his vengeance should escape him:

"Is he, then, really a coward? This wretch, then, had only the courage of a fencer, or of his pride, — this miserable renegade, this traitor to his country, whom I have buffeted and kicked — for I have buffeted and kicked you, marquis of ancient descent! You, the shame of your house, the shame of all brave men, modern or ancient! Ah, so then it is not from hypocrisy or calculation, as I believed, that you refuse to fight, but from fear! Ah, you needed, then, the noise of battle or the eyes of seconds in a duel to give you courage?"

"Take care, sir!" replied D'Aigrigny, stammering, and with his teeth set, for, at this contemptuous language, passion and hatred made him forget his fear.

"Must I, then, spit in your face, in order to summon thither all the blood left in your veins?" cried the maréchal, in his exasperation.

"Oh, this is too much, — too much!" said the Jesuit. And he hastily picked up the piece of the trenchant blade which was at his feet, repeating, as he did so, "This is too much!"

"It is not enough," said the maréchal, in a breathless voice; "there, Judas!" and he spat in his face. "And if you will not fight, now," added the maréchal, "I will break your skull with the chair, infamous assassin of my children!"

Père d'Aigrigny, on receiving this, the last outrage which a man already grossly insulted can receive, forgot his interests, his resolution, his fear, — forgot even Rodin,

—he felt only the longing of unbridled revenge, and his courage again returned; instead of dreading this struggle, he joyfully compared his vigorous frame to the feeble appearance of the maréchal, almost worn down by grief; for in such a combat—a brutal, savage, body-to-body combat—physical strength is an immense advantage.

In an instant D'Aigrigny had rolled his handkerchief around the sword-blade he picked up, and rushed on Maréchal Simon, who received his attack with intrepidity.

During the whole time that this unequal struggle lasted (for the maréchal had been for several days a prey to severe fever, which had weakened his frame) the two opponents, mute and sanguinary, did not utter a word or a cry. Had any person been present at this horrible scene, it would have been impossible to have known how, when, and where the blows were given. They would have seen two fearful, livid, convulsive heads stoop, rise again, or thrown back as the fierce contest proceeded; arms stiffen like bars of iron, or twist like snakes; and then, between the rapid undulation of the maréchal's blue frock coat and the Jesuit's black cassock, something glare and glitter at rapid intervals, like a blade of steel,—would have heard a heavy, dull trampling, or from time to time a deep and oppressed breathing.

At the end of not more than two minutes the two adversaries fell, and rolled over each other.

One of them—it was D'Aigrigny—making a violent effort, contrived to disengage himself from the arms that enclasped him, and raised himself on his knees. His arms fell useless by his side, and at the moment the expiring voice of the maréchal murmured these words, "My children! Dagobert!" "I have killed him!" uttered D'Aigrigny, in a feeble voice, "but I feel that I, too, am wounded mortally!"

And resting one hand on the ground, the Jesuit raised

the other to his breast. His cassock was slashed with cuts, but the blades they had used being triangular, and very sharp, the blood, instead of flowing outwardly, was absorbed within.

"Oh, I am dying! I choke!" said Père d'Aigrigny, whose convulsed features already announced the approaches of death.

At this moment the key turned twice in the lock with some noise, and Rodin, appearing at the threshold, thrust in his head, saying, in a humble tone and with a discreet air:

"May one come in?"

At such fearful sarcasm Père d'Aigrigny made a movement as if to rush at Rodin, but fell on one hand, uttering a horrid groan. The blood was choking him.

"Ah, monster of hell!" he murmured, throwing a look of fearful rage and agony at Rodin; "it is you who are the cause of my death."

"I always told you, my very dear father, that the old leaven of the horse-trooper in you would be injurious to you," replied Rodin, with a demon's sneer. "It was only a few days back that I so warned you, advising you to allow yourself to be quietly buffeted by this swordsman, who will, however, never handle sword again; and it is rightly so, because, in the first place, 'He who draws the sword perishes by the sword,' says the Scripture. And then, in the next place, the Maréchal Simon would have inherited in right of his daughters. What would you have had me do, my very dear father? It was absolutely necessary to sacrifice you to the common interest, and the more so as I knew what you had in store for me to-morrow. But I am too old a bird to be caught."

"Before I die," said Père d'Aigrigny, in a faint voice, "I will unmask you!"

"No, no; no such thing," said Rodin, shaking his head with a crafty air, "no, I tell you. I will confess you myself, if you desire it."

"Oh, how this alarms me!" murmured Père d'Aigrigny, whose eyelids were gradually closing; "may God have mercy upon me, if it be not too late. Alas! I am at this my last moment! I am — very guilty!"

"And, moreover, a great noodle," said Rodin, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he gazed on the agony of his accomplice with calm contempt.

Père d'Aigrigny had but a very few more moments to live, and Rodin, perceiving this, said to himself:

"It is time now to call for help."

And this the Jesuit then began to do, running into the other apartments aghast, alarmed.

Persons came at his cries.

But as we have said, Rodin only quitted the Père d'Aigrigny at the moment when he was breathing his last sigh.

That same evening, in his own chamber, by the light of a small lamp, Rodin was plunged in a kind of ecstatic contemplation in presence of the engraving representing Sixtus Quintus.

Midnight struck slowly by the large clock of the house.

When the last sounds had vibrated Rodin stood erect, in all the savage majesty of his infernal triumph, and exclaimed:

"It is the first of June! — there is no longer a living Rennepont! Methinks I hear St. Peter's at Rome striking the hour!"

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE MESSAGE.

Whilst Rodin remained plunged in ambitious ecstasy in contemplation of the portrait of Sixtus Quintus, the good little Père Caboccini, whose warm and indefatigable embraces had so much annoyed Rodin, had gone mysteriously in search of Faringhea, and, presenting to him a portion of an ivory crucifix, said to him only these words, with his usual complaisance and easy air:

"His Excellency the Cardinal Malipieri, when I quitted Rome, charged me to convey this to you on this day, the thirty-first of May."

The métis, who seldom evinced emotion, started suddenly, almost painfully; his features became gloomy, and, fixing on the little one-eyed father a piercing look, he replied:

"You have still some other words to say to me?"

"True," replied Caboccini, "and they are these, 'There's many a slip betwixt the cup and lip.'"

"'Tis well," said the métis; and, heaving a deep sigh, he fitted the fragment of the ivory crucifix with that he had already in his possession, and it matched precisely.

Père Caboccini looked at him with curiosity, for the cardinal had told him no more than to hand this piece of ivory to Faringhea, and say the words he had uttered, in order to prove the authenticity of his mission; and the reverend father, very much mystified, said to the métis:

"And what are you going to do with the crucifix now it is complete?"

"Nothing," said Faringhea, still absorbed in painful meditation.

"Nothing?" asked the reverend father, much astonished. "Then what was the use of bringing it to you from so great a distance?"

Without satisfying his curiosity, the métis said to him:

"At what hour to-morrow does the Reverend Father Rodin go to the Rue St. François?"

"Very early."

"Before he goes out he will go to the chapel to say his prayers?"

"Yes, according to the custom of our reverend fathers."

"You sleep near him?"

"As his *socius* I occupy a chamber close to his."

"It may be," said Faringhea, after a moment's silence, "that the reverend father, absorbed by the great interests which occupy him, may forget to go to the chapel — remind him of this pious duty."

"I will not fail."

"No, do not fail!" said Faringhea, with emphasis.

"Make your mind easy," said the worthy little *père;* "I see you are interested in his welfare."

"Very much."

"Such interest is praiseworthy; continue thus, and you may one day belong to our Society," said Père Caboccini, with earnestness.

"I am as yet but a poor auxiliary and affiliated member," said Faringhea, humbly; "but there is not one more devoted — soul, body, and mind — than myself to the Society," added the métis, with gloomy enthusiasm. "Bohwanie is nothing compared to it!"

"Bohwanie! Who is that, my good friend?"

"Bohwanie makes carcasses which rot, and the holy Society makes carcasses which progress."

"Ah, yes, — *Perinde ac cadaver*, these were the last words of our great St. Ignatius de Loyola. But who is Bohwanie?"

"Bohwanie is to the holy Society what the child is to the man," replied the métis, more and more excited. "Glory to the Company — glory! If my father was its enemy, I would strike my father. The man whose genius should inspire me with the greatest admiration, respect, and terror might be its enemy, yet would I strike that man, in spite of the admiration, respect, and terror with which he would inspire me," said the métis, with an effort; and then, after a moment's silence, he added, looking the Père Caboccini in the face, "I speak thus that you may repeat my words to Cardinal Malipieri, begging him to report them — to —"

Faringhea paused suddenly.

"To whom would you that the cardinal reported your words?"

"He knows," said the métis, abruptly. "Good night."

"Good night, my worthy friend; I can but commend your sentiments towards our holy Company. Alas! she has need of energetic defenders, for they do say that traitors have glided into her bosom."

"For such," replied Faringhea, "we should be wholly without pity."

"Without pity!" said the good little father; "we understand each other."

"Perhaps," said the métis. "But be sure you do not forget to remind the Reverend Father Rodin to go to the chapel before he leaves in the morning."

"I will not fail," said the Reverend Father Caboccini.

And the two men separated.

When he returned to his apartment the Père Caboccini learned that a courier, arrived from Rome that night, had brought despatches to Rodin.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE FIRST OF JUNE.

The chapel in the house of the reverend fathers in the Rue de Vangirard was very prettily fitted up. Large stained glass windows threw over it a mysterious twilight, the altar sparkled with gilding and ornament, and at the door of this little church, under the organ, in a dark recess, was a large holy water font, richly sculptured.

It was near this font, in an obscure corner, in which he could hardly be distinguished, that Faringhea came to kneel on the first of June, very early, as soon as the chapel doors were opened.

The métis was greatly dejected, from time to time he shuddered and sighed, as if repressing the agitations of a violent internal struggle. That savage and untamable soul, this monomaniac, possessed by the genius of evil and destruction, experienced, as may be supposed, a deep admiration for Rodin, who exercised over him a kind of magnetic fascination. The métis, a brute beast, ferocious in his intelligence, and with human features, saw in the infernal genius of Rodin something superhuman. And Rodin, too penetrating not to be certain of the savage devotion of this wretch, had, as we have seen, made fruitful use of him in the tragic termination of the loves of Adrienne and Djalma. What excited, to an incredible point, Faringhea's admiration, was all he knew or could comprehend of the Society of Jesus. This immense occult power, which undermined

the world by its subterranean ramifications, and attained its ends by diabolical means, had struck the métis with the most savage enthusiasm. And if anything in the world surpassed his fanatic admiration of Rodin, it was his blind devotion for the company of Ignatius Loyola, who made the "dead to advance," as the métis expressed it.

Faringhea, concealed in the recess of the chapel, was reflecting deeply when steps were heard, and Rodin appeared, accompanied by his *socius*, the good little one-eyed father.

Whether from abstraction, or that the shadows projected by the organ did not allow him to see the métis, Rodin dipped his fingers in the holy water font, near which Faringhea was, without perceiving him, as motionless as a statue; he felt the cold damp flow from his brow, so greatly was he excited.

Rodin's prayer was short, as may be believed, for he was in haste to go to the Rue St. François. After having (as did the Père Caboccini) knelt for some moments, he arose, bowed reverentially to the choir, and went towards the door, followed a few paces off by his *socius*.

At the moment when Rodin approached the holy water font he saw the métis, whose tall figure was visible in the deep shadow in which he had until this moment remained. Faringhea, advancing a little, bowed respectfully to Rodin, who said to him, in a low voice and with an abstracted air:

"By and by — at two o'clock — at my residence."

And thus saying, Rodin stretched out his arm in order to dip his hand in the *bénitier;* but the métis saved him this trouble, by presenting hastily the brush (called the *goupillon*), which usually remains in the holy water.

Squeezing in his dirty fingers the moistened hairs of the *goupillon*, which the métis held by the handle, Rodin

imbibed sufficient on his thumb and forefinger, and raised them to his forehead, where, according to custom, he traced the sign of the cross; he then opened the chapel door and went out, after having turned around and again said to Faringhea:

"At two o'clock, at my residence."

Thinking that he might avail himself of the *goupillon* which Faringhea, motionless, aghast, still held out with a trembling and agitated hand, the Père Caboccini thrust his finger towards the métis; but he (desirous, perhaps, to confine his attention to Rodin) withdrew the brush hastily, and the Père Caboccini, frustrated in his attempt, followed Rodin precipitately, as he dared not on this day lose sight of him for a moment, and entered with him into the hackney-coach, which led them to the Rue St. François.

It is impossible to depict the look which the métis threw on Rodin at the moment when the latter quitted the chapel.

Left alone in the holy place, Faringhea sank down, and falling half kneeling, half crouching, on the pavement, hid his face in his hands.

As the vehicle approached the Quartier du Marius, where the house of Marius de Rennepont was, the feverish agitation, the devouring impatience of triumph, was to be read in Rodin's countenance. Two or three times, opening his pocketbook, he read and arranged the different acts or attestations of the deaths of the members of the Rennepont family, and from time to time thrust his head out of the window with anxiety, as though he would hasten the slow motion of the vehicle.

The good little *père*, his *socius*, never took his eyes from him, and his look had an expression as crafty as peculiar.

At length the carriage, entering the Rue St. François, stopped before the iron door of the old house,

which had been so recently opened after having been closed for a century and a half.

Rodin sprung from the hackney-coach as agile as a young man, and knocked violently at the door, whilst the Père Caboccini, less nimble, alighted more cautiously.

There was no answer to the resounding strokes of the knocker which Rodin gave.

Trembling with anxiety, he again knocked, and, listening attentively, heard the approach of slow and dragging footsteps; but they paused some paces from the door, which did not open.

"It is being roasted alive on burning coals," said Rodin, for his breast seemed on fire with anxiety. After having again knocked at the door he began to bite his nails, according to his usual custom.

Suddenly the door turned on its hinges, and Samuel, the guardian Jew, appeared under the portico.

The old man's features expressed the bitterest grief; on his venerable cheeks was still visible the trace of recent tears, which his tremulous and aged hands endeavoured to wipe away, as he opened the door to Rodin.

"Who are you, gentlemen?" inquired Samuel of Rodin.

"I am the agent charged with the powers and procurations of the Abbé Gabriel, the sole surviving heir of the Rennepont family," replied Rodin, in a hurried tone. "This gentleman is my secretary," he added, pointing to the Père Caboccini, who bowed.

After having looked attentively at Rodin, Samuel replied:

"Yes, I remember. Be so good as to follow me, sir." And the old guardian turned towards the building in the garden, motioning the two reverend fathers to follow him.

"This cursed old man has so irritated me by keeping me at the door," said Rodin, in a low voice, to his *socius*,

"that I feel as if I had a fever. My lips and throat are as dry and burning as parchment shrivelled in the fire."

"Won't you take something, good father, dear father? Let me ask for a glass of water from this man," replied the one-eyed Jesuit, with tender solicitude.

"No, no," said Rodin, "it is nothing. My impatience fevers me, that's all."

Pale and disconsolate, Bathsheba, Samuel's wife, was standing at the door of the lodge they occupied, and which was under the portico of the *porte cochère*, when the Israelite went towards her, and said, in Hebrew:

"And the curtains of the chamber of mourning?"

"Are closed."

"And the iron chest?"

"Is prepared," replied Bathsheba, still speaking Hebrew.

After having pronounced these words, completely unintelligible to Rodin and the Père Caboccini, Samuel and Bathsheba, in spite of the misery so apparent in their countenances, exchanged a kind of peculiar and sinister smile.

Then Samuel, preceding the two reverend fathers, went up the steps and entered the vestibule, where a lamp was burning. Rodin, who had a good memory for localities, went towards the red salon, where the first meeting of the heirs had taken place, when Samuel stopped him, saying:

"That is not the way to go."

Then taking the lamp, he turned towards a dark staircase, for the windows of the house had not been opened.

"But," said Rodin, "the last time we met in the salon on the ground floor."

"To-day we meet above," replied Samuel.

And he ascended the stairs slowly.

"Where? where above?" inquired Rodin, as he followed him.

"In the chamber of mourning," said the Israelite, still ascending the stairs.

"And what is the chamber of mourning?" inquired Rodin, surprised.

"A place of tears and death," replied the Jew, and he still mounted the stairs through darkness which the small lamp hardly dissipated.

"But," said Rodin, more and more surprised, and stopping short, "why go to this place?"

"The money is there," replied Samuel.

And he still ascended.

"The money is there! Oh, that's another thing!" answered Rodin.

And he hastened to regain the steps he had lost by his delay.

Samuel went higher, higher. Having attained a certain height, the staircase made an abrupt elbow, and the two Jesuits could see, by the pale ray of the little lamp, and in the void left between the iron balustrade and the arched roof, the profile of the old Israelite, who, in advance of them, was ascending the stairs with difficulty, and by the aid of the iron baluster.

Rodin was struck with the expression of Samuel's physiognomy. His black eyes, usually mild and veiled by age, shone with singular brilliancy. His features, still stamped with sorrow, intelligence, and goodness, seemed to contract, harden, and with his thin lips he smiled strangely.

"It is not extremely high," observed Rodin, in a low tone, to Père Caboccini, "and yet my legs quite fail me. I am completely out of breath, and my temples beat as if they would burst."

And Rodin panted for breath; but the worthy little Père Caboccini, usually so full of tender care for his companion, made no reply, but appeared as if much preoccupied.

"Shall we soon reach the place?" asked Rodin of Samuel, in an impatient tone.

"We have arrived," replied Samuel.

"At last! Well, that is fortunate!" was Rodin's remark.

"Very fortunate," responded the Israelite.

And standing aside on the corridor, whither he had preceded Rodin, he pointed, with the hand in which he held the lamp, to a large door from which proceeded a pale light.

Rodin, in spite of his increasing surprise, entered boldly, followed by Père Caboccini and Samuel.

The chamber in which these three persons now found themselves was very large, and only received its light from a square *belvéder;* but the glass on four sides of this sort of lanthorn disappeared beneath sheets of lead, pierced each with seven holes, forming the cross.

Thus the daylight could only penetrate this apartment by these punctured crosses, and the obscurity would have been entire but for a lamp which was burning on a large and massive console of black marble, which was placed against one of the walls. It might, indeed, be called a funereal apartment, for throughout there was nothing but black draperies or black curtains fringed with white. There was no other piece of furniture there but the console of marble we have mentioned.

On this console was an iron casket of the style and construction of the seventeenth century, admirably forged of open work — a real lace of steel.

Samuel, addressing Rodin, who was wiping his brows

him with his dirty pocket-handkerchief, and looking about much astonished, but by no means alarmed, said to him:

"The wishes of the testator, however strange, are sacred for me, and with your leave I will accomplish them all."

"Nothing more just," replied Rodin; "but what are we going to do here?"

"You will know directly, monsieur. You appear here as the representative of the sole remaining heir of the Rennepont family, M. l'Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, do you not?"

"I do; and here are my credentials," answered Rodin.

"To save time," resumed Samuel, "while we are waiting the presence of the attesting magistrate, I will just go over with you the amount of accumulated property belonging to the Rennepont family, which I but yesterday withdrew from the Bank of France."

"Ah!" exclaimed Rodin, springing forwards to seize the casket, "the money is there — is it?"

"It is," said Samuel. "Here is my account — your secretary will call over the sums, and I will produce the corresponding value as he names them. After which the whole will be replaced in the casket, which I shall deliver up to you in the presence of a magistrate."

"Nothing can be better or more businesslike," said Rodin.

Samuel then placed a small ledger in the hands of Caboccini, and, approaching the iron casket, touched a spring unperceived by Rodin, and immediately the solid lid flew open and displayed a mass of notes and papers.

Caboccini then, by Samuel's directions, began reading aloud the inventory of values contained in the casket, the Jew verifying each amount by handing to Rodin a bank bill of corresponding value, which, after due examination and close scrutiny on the part of the Jesuit, was by him returned to Samuel, who carefully replaced each precious document in the box.

This affair, important as it was, took up but a short space, for these immense sums were all comprised in eight vouchers, 500,000 francs in bank-notes, 35,000 francs in gold, and 250 francs in silver, odd money — making a total of 212,175,000 francs.[1]

As Rodin finished counting the last of the five hundred bank-notes, each of the value of one thousand francs, he said, as he returned it to Samuel:

"All is correct, and the total as you say, two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs!"

Doubtless the sight of such riches within his immediate grasp was too much for his senses to endure, for a species of giddiness seized his brain, his breathing became short, and a mist seemed to dance before his eyes. So powerfully was he affected that he became quite unable to support himself, and, taking the arm of Caboccini, he said, in an agitated tone and manner:

"It is strange I should be thus overcome. I thought my nerves were stronger; but what I experience is unlike anything I ever felt in my life."

And so fearfully was the natural lividness of Rodin's cadaverous countenance increased, so severe, with the convulsive spasms which seemed to rack his frame, that poor, fat, little Father Caboccini, while striving his utmost to sustain him, exclaimed, with alarm:

"My dear, worthy father, pray try and recover yourself — let not the intoxication of success carry you away to this extent!"

While the one-eyed *socius* was thus lavishing his solicitous cares on Rodin, Samuel had been occupied in

[1] The eight vouchers were for 2,000,000 francs in the French funds, at 5 per cent., payable to the bearer; 900,000 francs in the 3 per cents., also payable to bearer; 5,000 Bank shares, payable to bearer; 3,000 shares in the 4 canals, payable at sight; 125,000 ducats in the Neapolitan funds, payable to bearer; 3,000 metalliques of Austria, payable to bearer; 75,000 livres sterling in the 3 per cent. English funds, payable to bearer; 1,200,000 Dutch florins, payable to bearer; 28,860,000 of florins in the funds of the Low Countries, payable, like all the preceding, to the bearer.

point of securing, the transition from this post to the pontifical throne was a mere step.

The silent spectator of this strange scene, Samuel, in his turn smiled, when, by means of a spring known to himself alone, he had secured the casket.

The metallic sound caused by the closing of the spring recalled Rodin from the most boundless flights of ambition to the sober realities of every-day life, and he observed to Samuel, in a sharp tone:

"You hear! to me — to me alone do these treasures belong!"

So saying, he extended his eager and impatient hands to grasp the casket of iron, as if he would hold possession of it even before the arrival of the magistrate.

But Samuel also exhibited a singular transformation of his usual appearance. Folding his arms on his breast, and drawing up his form bent by extreme age, he assumed a look at once imposing and menacing; his eyes sparkled with unwonted brightness, and appeared to dart forth fiery glances of wrathful indignation, as he exclaimed, in a deep, solemn voice:

"This fortune, originally the wreck of all possessed by one of the noblest of mankind, driven to self-destruction by the artifices and persecutions of the sons of Loyola, — this fortune, swelled even to an amount that would make a monarch happy to call his, thanks to the faithful guardianship of the three generations through whose hands this trust has passed, shall never be the reward of falsehood, hypocrisy, or murder! No, no, the Almighty, in his all-seeing justice, has willed it otherwise!"

"How dare you speak of murder?" asked Rodin, boldly.

Samuel replied not; but merely stamped his foot, and extended his arms slowly towards the lower end of the salon. And a fearful spectacle presented itself to the eyes of Rodin and Father Caboccini.

The draperies which concealed the walls were drawn

back, as though by some invisible hand; and ranged around a sort of crypt, lighted by the blue funereal rays of a silver lamp, were placed six corpses, extended upon black draperies, and clad in long black dresses: these bodies were those of

JACQUES RENNEPONT.
FRANÇOIS HARDY.
ROSE AND BLANCHE SIMON.
ADRIENNE AND DJALMA.

They appeared as if sleeping, their eyelids were gently closed, and their hands folded across their bosoms.

Trembling in every limb, Father Caboccini made the sign of the cross; then, retreating to the utmost limits of the apartment, he supported himself against the wall, while he covered his face closely with his hands.

Rodin, on the contrary, as though under some irresistible attraction, drew nigh, with glaring eyes, distorted features, and hair that stood on end, to behold more closely these senseless and inanimate remains of beings who might still have been living and happy but for him.

It might have been supposed that these unfortunate descendants of Marius Rennepont had just given up their breath, so calm and peaceful seemed their slumber.[1]

"Behold your victims!" cried Samuel, in a voice broken by sobs. "Yes, they have been sacrificed to your vile machinations, their death was necessary to the furtherance of your base desires; but, each time that one of the ill-fated members of this unfortunate race fell beneath your fiendish devices, I contrived to obtain possession of the remains, which received from me every pious care love or duty could suggest, for it was appointed me to see they all reposed in the same sepulchre. Oh,

[1] Should this picture be considered overdrawn, we must beg of the reader to recollect the surprising discoveries and improvements made in the art of embalming, and among others those brought to light by Doctor Gannal. — E. S.

cursed — thrice accursed man! Though you have thus rent them from life, you have no power over their cold, inanimate forms, — your murderous hands dare not molest their pale corpses!"

Still drawn on by an irresistible inclination, Rodin had by degrees approached close to the funereal couch of Djalma, when, desirous of satisfying himself he was not the sport of some horrible vision, the Jesuit ventured to touch the hands of the Indian which were folded across his bosom; though icy cold, the skin was soft and moist. Rodin shrunk back with horror, and for several seconds a convulsive spasm seemed to rack his frame; but the first shock over, reflection came to his aid, and with it that unconquerable, unflinching energy, that stubborn perseverance in his most diabolical schemes, which had raised him so high in the opinion of his confederates. Recovering his self-possession, then, he boldly planted himself in a stern attitude of defiance, passed his hand across his brow, drew up his head, and several times moistened his lips so as to be capable of articulating; for he felt the burning dryness and scorching of his mouth, throat, and chest momentarily increase, without being able to divine the cause of the devouring fire by which he was consumed. But he at length succeeded in giving to his excited features an ironical and imperious expression, as turning towards Samuel, who was weeping silently and bitterly, he said, in a harsh, guttural voice:

"We have no need of witnesses to prove the deaths of the various heirs, for here they all are very obligingly to spare us any trouble by attesting their own decease;" then, extending his bony hand, he pointed derisively to the six bodies.

At these words from the lips of his general, Father Caboccini again made the sign of the cross, as though in presence of a fiend.

"Father of Mercies!" said Samuel, "have you then

utterly forsaken this man? With what a fiendish glare he contemplates his victims!"

"Now, sir," observed Rodin, with a horrible smile, "when you consider that we have been kept gazing sufficiently long on your collection of natural curiosities, perhaps you will have the goodness to proceed to business. What might have been your motive in favouring us with this display, I know not; but if your friends here have come to their deaths by unlawful means, at least my calmness must convince you that I was in no manner concerned in the malpractices you so unceremoniously allude to. But this is all idle talk. I must insist upon a conclusion to the present affair, as I have an appointment at my own house at two o'clock. Reach down the casket!" And thus speaking, Rodin advanced towards the console on which it was placed.

Struck with indignation, wrath, and horror at the effrontery and hardihood of Rodin, Samuel quickly stepped before him, and, forcibly pressing on a small knob placed in the centre of the lid of the casket, and which yielded to his pressure, he cried out:

"Since your diabolical spirit cannot be touched by remorse, let us see whether it will remain equally inaccessible to the cry of baffled covetousness and defeated cupidity."

"What says he?" exclaimed Rodin. "And what is he about to do?"

"Behold!" said Samuel, smiling in his turn a smile of exultation. "I told you that, though you had hunted your victims to their graves, you should not have their spoils, — that the object of your wicked desires would yet escape your blood-stained hands."

Scarcely had Samuel finished speaking than small flames issued through the open-worked sides of the iron casket, while a slight odour, as of burning paper, diffused itself throughout the room. Rodin comprehended all.

"It is on fire!" exclaimed he, precipitating himself

on the casket to carry it off; but the object of so many crimes, so many nefarious schemes, yielded not to his hand; it was firmly riveted to the solid marble console.

"You are right," said Samuel, with a grim smile of triumph, "it is on fire, and past your power to extinguish; and, ere many minutes have elapsed, a few smouldering ashes will alone remain of all this truly regal treasure, and far better it were a heap of ashes than to pass unto you or yours. These riches are not mine; but the right to destroy them for ever has been formally and legally given me; for Gabriel de Rennepont will be faithful to the oath he has taken."

"Help, help! fire! water!" screamed Rodin, throwing himself on the casket, which he covered with his body, while he vainly strove to extinguish the flame which, kept alive by the current of air, streamed forth in bright jets from the numberless openings in the iron work; then its intensity gradually diminishing, a few slender wreaths of blue curling smoke escaped from the box, and then all was extinct. The deed was accomplished!

Then Rodin, breathless and exhausted, turned around, and, leaning one hand on the console, with the other struck his temples with despairing anguish; while, for the first time in his life, large bitter tears of baffled rage and fury streamed down his sunken and cadaverous cheeks.

Suddenly the most acute pains shot through his frame — they had been gradually increasing for some time past, though he had exerted himself to the utmost to subdue them. The mortal agony he endured at length burst through all restraint, and in the paroxysm by which he was attacked he was compelled to sink upon his knees, for his limbs were unequal to support him; and, pressing his hands convulsively to his bosom, he exclaimed, while endeavouring to force a smile:

"'Tis nothing; therefore do not rejoice too much —

merely a passing spasm; the treasure is destroyed, 'tis true; but I still — remain head of the Order — and — I — Oh, what torture do I suffer! I am parching as though in a furnace," continued he, writhing and twisting in agony, "from the moment of my entering this accursed house I have felt — I know — not what. If it were not that I have so — long — lived on roots — and bread — drinking only water — all of which — I have — purchased — myself, I should — fancy — I had — been — poisoned — for Cardinal — Malipieri — is crafty — as dangerous. Yes — yes — I still triumph. I cannot, will not — die — any more now than I did when seized upon by cholera. No! I say — I defy death — to — touch — me — amid — my — success — my — triumphant — great — ness."

Then, with a convulsive start and stiffening limbs, he exclaimed:

"Surely some fire devours my vitals; 'tis too, too true, I have swallowed poison. But by whom administered, and where?"

And, again interrupting himself, Rodin exclaimed, in a stifled voice:

"Help — oh, help! — why do you not come — to my assistance — instead of gazing on me — like spectres? Help, help — I say!"

Samuel and Father Caboccini, horror-struck at the sight of such fearful agony, had no power to move or stir.

"Help, I say!" repeated Rodin, in a strangulated voice; "for this poison is most deadly and tormenting in its effect; but how — could it — have — been — given — to me?"

Then with a wild scream of rage, as though a sudden thought had darted into his brain, he exclaimed:

"Ah! — this morning — Faringhea — the holy water — given by him — he so expert and skilful — in all subtle poisons. Yes — 'twas he did it — he had — had

— an interview with Malipieri. Oh, devil! demon! fiend! — well — have — you played your part. Oh, torture! — 'tis finished — I die! They will — regret me — the fools! — idiots! Oh, hell! thy torments — cannot exceed mine! No — no! — the church knows — not — all it loses in me! but I burn — I scorch — help me — save me!"

At this instant rapid steps were heard on the stairs, and in a few seconds Doctor Baleinier, followed by the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, appeared at the entrance of the chamber of mourning. The princess, having only that day heard vaguely of the death of D'Aigrigny, was hurrying to Rodin to learn the full particulars from him.

But when, abruptly entering the room, she had cast a glance around her, and beheld the frightful spectacle which presented itself, — the sight of Rodin convulsed in his last agonies, then, a little farther off, the six dead bodies lighted by the dim funereal lamp, and had recognised among them the remains of her niece as well as those of the two innocent girls sent by her advice to meet a certain death, — the princess remained transfixed with astonishment and horror. Her reason was unequal to so dreadful a shock. After slowly gazing around her, she raised her arms towards heaven and burst into a loud, wild laugh. The wretched woman was mad.

While Doctor Baleinier in deep distress supported the head of Rodin, who expired in his arms, Faringhea appeared at the door; and, standing in the shadow, he pointed to the corpse of Rodin, and exclaimed, with a ferocious glance:

"That man sought to become chief of the Company of Jesus only to destroy it. To me the Company of Jesus is dearer than Bohwanie. I have done, therefore, as the cardinal bade me."

# EPILOGUE

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### FOUR YEARS AFTERWARDS.

FOUR years had passed away since the events last recorded, and Gabriel de Rennepont despatched the following epistle to the Abbé Joseph Charpentier, acting curate of the parish of St. Aubin, a small village in Sologne:

"FRESHWATER FARM, June 2, 1836.

"*My dear Joseph:* — With the intention of writing you a long letter, I had seated myself yesterday before the small, old-fashioned table of black wood you have so often admired. You recollect, do you not, that the window of my room looks into the farmyard, and that, while sitting at my writing, I can distinctly perceive all that passes there?

"I think I see you smile at this long introduction — have a little patience and I will tell you what I saw, and how it was that my attention became so diverted as to induce me to put off my letter till to-day.

"How I wished for you, my dear Joseph, to share with me the delightful spectacle that presented itself! and equally did I long for your artistical knowledge, that I might have transferred the charming scene to paper, through the medium of my pencil!

"The sun was just sinking behind the hills, the sky glittering with the light, fleecy clouds of vivid gold and purple, the soft, balmy air of spring came laden with fresh sweetness, as it passed over the thick, clustering

honeysuckle hedge, which, growing along the side of the little rivulet, forms one of the boundaries of the court below.

"Seated on a stone bench, beneath the great pear-tree, whose branches overspread the barn, was my adopted father Dagobert, — the brave and fine-hearted old soldier you so much admire. He seemed pensive, — his care-worn, wrinkled countenance was bent downwards, his head drooped upon his breast, as, with an abstracted air, he patted old Killjoy, who stood near his master, leaning his intelligent head on his knees. Beside Dagobert was his wife, my adopted mother, busily occupied in some kind of needlework, and close by them, on a low stool, sat Angèle, Agricola's young wife, nursing her infant, while the gentle-hearted Mayeux, holding the elder of Agricola's children on her knees, was engaged in teaching him his letters.

"Agricola had just returned from the fields, and was beginning to free his oxen from the yoke, when, no doubt, struck like me by the beauty of the picture before him, he stood for an instant gazing on it in mute admiration, his hand still leaning on the yoke, beneath which the pair of fine large black oxen bent their strong yet submissive heads.

"I cannot attempt to convey to you, my friend, an adequate idea of the extreme loveliness of the scene, gilded by the last rays of the setting sun, whose beams flickered and danced among the bright green leaves of our rich foliage.

"What different expressions were visible on the countenances of the various persons composing the interesting group! First, the venerable features of the old soldier; then the tender, maternal goodness evident in the physiognomy of my adopted mother; the sweet and blooming face of Angèle, as she gazed upon her child; the gentle sadness of La Mayeux, as she from time to time pressed her lips on the cherub cheeks of

Agricola's eldest born; and, last of all, Agricola himself, whose fine, manly features seemed the very mirror of the noble, generous spirit that dwelt within.

"Oh, my friend, when I contemplate this assemblage of beings — so good, so devoted, so truly attached and mutually dear — collected together in the retirement of a place like this, I lift up my heart to God with a feeling of gratitude too great for words to express. But this domestic peace, the pure calm evening, the perfume of the wild flowers and woods borne along by the evening breeze, the profound silence, interrupted only by the plashing of the small waterfall adjoining the farm, — all these calm delights lull the soul into a state of peace and good-will towards all men and ineffable love and thankfulness to the Great Giver of them, while our hearts seem to swell with an indescribable feeling of happiness too mighty for words to express.

"Can you not understand all this, my friend, — you who have so often dwelt upon the sweet yet melancholy pleasure which has elevated your feelings when wandering alone amidst your immense plains of briar roses, surrounded by dark forests of fir? Have you not felt your eyes become moist, without being able to explain why such should be the case? I have felt all this, and more: often and often during the delicious nights I have passed in utter loneliness amid the deep solitudes of America.

"But, alas! a painful interruption caused a temporary cloud to fall over the charming picture I have endeavoured to sketch for you. All at once I heard Dagobert's wife exclaim:

"'Dear husband, you are weeping!'

"At these words Agricola, Angèle, and La Mayeux rose, and eagerly crowded around the old soldier, while their countenances expressed the most tender solicitude; then as the soldier raised his head, two large, round tears might be distinctly seen coursing each other down his

weather-beaten cheeks, till they fell on his gray moustache.

"'Do not be uneasy, my children,' said he, in a voice of deep emotion, ''tis nothing; but I could not help sorrowing as I remembered that it is exactly four years ago since that first of June.'

"He could not proceed, and, as he lifted his hands upwards for the purpose of drying his eyes, those around him, as well as myself, could observe that he held in his fingers a small bronze chain, to which was suspended a medal. This was his most precious relic, and fell into his possession four years ago, when, almost dying of grief for the loss of those two angelic creatures of whom I have so often talked to you, my friend, he found it around the neck of Maréchal Simon, when he was brought home dead after a desperate encounter, the despairing father having placed around his own neck the medal so long worn by his beloved children.

"I instantly quitted my room, as you may suppose, in order to lend my aid in endeavouring to calm the distress and soften the painful recollections of this excellent man. By degrees we succeeded in restoring him to tranquillity, and the rest of the evening passed away calmly and piously.

"You can scarcely believe how vividly this little incident recalled to my mind the late distressing scenes that have occurred to my ill-fated family, and how deeply, after I was again in the solitude of my chamber, I pondered over those events, from which I turn with fear and horror. My imagination seemed to call up the interesting victims of those fearful and mysterious circumstances, the frightful extent of which can never be known, owing to the deaths of Fathers d'Aigrigny and Rodin, and the incurable madness of Madame de Saint-Dizier, the three authors, or, at least, principal actors, in so many horrible calamities — calamities never to be repaired — for those who have thus been sacrificed to an insatiable

ambition would have been the pride and honour of mankind by their extensive benevolence and good works.

"Ah, my friend, had you but known, as I did, the real value of those noble hearts now for ever cold, or the splendid projects of universal charity meditated by the young and lovely lady, whose mind was formed of none but the finer and more superior elements that constitute a generous spirit, an enlightened understanding, and a soul all greatness, magnanimity, and the purest truth! The evening of her melancholy death, after a long conversation with her on a subject (which must be a matter of secrecy even from you), as if by way of preliminary to the magnificent designs she contemplated, she confided to my charge a considerable sum of money, saying, with her usual grace and sweetness of manner, 'My enemies are endeavouring to ruin me, 'tis even possible they may succeed. What I now give you will, at least, be safe in your hands, and may be useful to those who are in trouble, need, or sickness; to such give largely, give freely; dispense wherever and whenever the opportunity presents itself. I would fain make all the world partakers in my own inexpressible joy and content.'

"I forget whether I ever told you, my friend, that, after the fatal occurrences which followed each other with such fearful rapidity, perceiving Dagobert and his wife (my adopted mother) reduced to want, the gentle and amiable Mayeux unable to support herself upon her slender earnings, Agricola expecting to become a father, and myself deprived by my bishop of my humble curacy, and placed under an interdict, for having given religious consolation to a Protestant and performed the funeral rites over the body of an unfortunate creature whom despair had driven to suicide, — finding myself without resources of any kind, for the profession I follow admits not of my seeking the every-day means of gaining a livelihood, I scarcely recollect whether I ever told you that, after the death of Mlle. de Cardoville, I considered

weather-beaten cheeks, till they fell on his gray moustache.

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myself at liberty to employ a small portion of the money entrusted to me by her for the aid of the unfortunate in purchasing this small farm in Dagobert's name. Yes, my friend, you have now the true history of the origin of my fortune, concerning which so many different rumours have been spread.

"The farmer of whom we bought our few acres of land began our agricultural education; our own desire to learn, aided by the perusal of several clever and practical works, completed it. Agricola is a first-rate farmer, and I have done my best to imitate him, without considering it in any manner derogatory to my sacred calling; for the toil which furnishes bread to the hungry is thrice blessed of the Lord, and it is merely showing forth the praise and glory of the all-bountiful Giver of good to till and cultivate the earth his hand created.

"Dagobert, his first bitter grief a little calmed, soon regained his health and vigour amid the simple, quiet life we lead; he had practised many agricultural arts in Siberia, therefore he became of first-rate value and importance in our little colony.

"My adopted mother, Agricola's excellent wife, and La Mayeux divide the domestic duties between them, and I gratefully acknowledge that the Almighty's blessing has visited our humble dwelling; and the united group of careworn creatures, whose hearts have been so severely chastened, now assemble in peace, feel content beneath one roof, thankfully exchange their past hard trials for the calm solitude of a country life, and gladly devote themselves to the rude labours of the field in return for an innocent, peaceful, and tranquil mode of existence.

"Yourself, my friend, have had opportunities of witnessing and admiring during our long winter evenings the fine and delicate mind of the gentle Mayeux, the uncommon power of understanding and first-rate poetical talent possessed by Agricola, the devoted maternal

affection of his mother, the strong, plain sense of his father, with the sweet cheerfulness and winning kindness of Angèle. You, then, can fully agree with me in asserting that it would be impossible to form a more delightful society, or one more anxious to contribute to each other's happiness. How many long winter evenings have we not passed together, assembled around a fire of crackling fagots, reading aloud by turns, or commenting on the contents of those inspired chapters, always new, imperishable, and divine, that warm the heart and expand and elevate the soul. What interesting discussions have we not pursued till the advance of night compelled us unwillingly to separate; then, upon other occasions, there was the treat of listening to the effusions of Agricola's pastoral muse, or the timid literary contributions of La Mayeux, varied by the union of the clear, sweet voice of Angèle with the rich manly tones of Agricola, as they sung together some simple national melody. Sometimes Dagobert would recite to us, in his plain, unpretending way, the scenes he had witnessed and been engaged in in other lands, relate his bygone exploits, till his eye would kindle and his manner resume its former energy. To wind up this catalogue of rural delights, fancy the merry laugh of the happy, healthful children, as they sported with the good old dog Killjoy, who permitted his little playfellows to do with him as they would, seeming conscious that he could not with safety return their innocent and loving attacks.

"'Intelligent creature!' would Dagobert exclaim, as he watched every turn of his old and faithful companion's countenance; 'he seems, however happy, as though continually looking for and expecting somebody!'

"Yes, the sagacious animal has never forgotten those two pure angels, whose guard and escort he was so many years; time seems not to diminish his regrets, — he seems, as Dagobert expresses it, 'to be always looking for some one.' Think not that our own enjoyment has rendered

us forgetful, far from it. Not a day passes on which those names dearest to our hearts are not tenderly and piously uttered; and the sad recollections they recall, incessantly hovering around us, give to our calm and peaceful existence that shade of gentle seriousness which so much struck you.

"Doubtless, my friend, this mode of life, restricted as it is to our immediate family circle, and extending not abroad for the relief and well-being of our fellow creatures, is somewhat egotistical. But, alas! our means are as limited as our sphere of action; and although the poor and needy ever find a place beside our frugal table, and a shelter beneath our roof, we are compelled to abandon all idea of doing good upon an enlarged scale, the trifling produce of our little farm barely sufficing for our own wants.

"Yet painful as these reflections are, I still cannot blame myself for the resolution I formed to keep the oath I voluntarily took — sacred and irrevocable — for ever to renounce the immense wealth to which, by the death of the other descendants of the family, I became sole heir. And I consider myself as having discharged a great and imperative duty in directing the person in whose hands the riches were deposited to reduce them to ashes sooner than to allow of their falling into the possession of persons who would have made so vile a use of them, or of perjuring myself by rescinding a donation made freely, seriously, and voluntarily by me.

"And yet, when I consider the realisation of the magnificent designs of my predecessor, designs only practicable with immense resources, but which Mlle. de Cardoville, ere the late fatal events transpired, had fully purposed carrying out, in concert with M. François Hardy, Prince Djalma, Maréchal Simon, his daughters, and myself, — when I think of the splendid focus of living strength which such an association would have displayed, and consider the prodigious influence its

emanations and radiations might have had on the whole civilised world, my indignant horror, my hatred, both as a man and a Christian, increase still more against the vile company whose black and nefarious schemes have crushed the germ of so great, so admirable, and so prolific a prospect of universal good.

"And what remains of projects so ably devised and so splendidly provided for? Seven tombs alone bear witness of the frustration of one of the noblest designs that ever graced the heart of man. Yes, my friend, seven tombs, — for mine, too, is prepared in the mausoleum, built, under Samuel's direction, on the site of the house in the Rue Neuve St. François, and of which he has constituted himself the keeper, faithful even to the last.

"I had proceeded thus far with my letter, my friend, when yours arrived.

"It appears, then, that, not satisfied with forbidding you to see me, your bishop now prohibits your future correspondence with me. Your regrets, expressive of so much sorrow and distress, at this fresh injunction, have deeply affected me. How many times have we conversed together touching ecclesiastical discipline, and the absolute power possessed by bishops over poor humble individuals like ourselves, left wholly to their mercy, without help or appeal!

"All this is very — very painful, and not a little hard to bear; but still it is the law of that church whose laws you, my friend, as well as myself, have vowed to observe and obey. You must, therefore, imitate my submission. To a man of honour a promise, let alone an oath, is too sacred to be tampered with or broken.

"I only wish, my dear and worthy Joseph, that you possessed the same delightful consolations I have found to console me in my disgrace and retirement. But I must not proceed, I feel I cannot write with the calm-

ness I should; and I know too well, by my own heart, what you suffer, to desire to increase your unhappiness.

"I must conclude this letter. Were I to write more, I should, perhaps, express myself in an unbecoming way towards those whose commands we are bound to respect.

"Then, since it must be so, I address you for the last time. Adieu, adieu, most affectionately and tenderly I bid you, my beloved friend, farewell for ever. My heart seems broken — crushed!

"GABRIEL DE RENNEPONT."

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### PARDON.

The day was just about to break. A pale and almost imperceptible pink light was beginning to appear in the East; but the stars were still shining with brightness in the midst of the azure of the sky. The birds, awaking in the fresh foliage of the large woods of the valley, began to warble the matin song. A light white vapour was arising from the high grass, bathed with the dews of night, whilst the calm and limpid waters of the great lake reflected the gray dawn in its deep blue mirror. All bespoke one of those joyous and warm days at the commencement of summer.

On one side of the valley, and facing towards the east, was a tuft of old hoar willows, hollowed out by time, and, with their rugged bark, concealed by the climbing branches of wild honeysuckle and creepers of all colours. These aged willows formed a sort of natural shelter, and beneath these gnarled and vast roots, covered with thick moss, a man and woman were seated. Their hair was perfectly white, and their deep wrinkles and bent backs bespoke extreme old age. Yet this woman had very lately been young and handsome, and long black tresses had covered her pale brow. And yet this man, too, had very lately been in the vigour of his age.

From the spot where this man and this woman were reposing, the valley, the lake, the woods, and, above the woods, the lofty and abrupt summit of a blue-topped

mountain, behind which the sun was rising, were all visible. This tableau, half concealed by the pale transparency of the early hour, was at once smiling, melancholy, and solemn.

"Oh, my sister!" said the old man to the woman, who, like himself, was reposing in the rural retreat formed by the *bosquet* of willows. "Oh my sister, how many times, for how many ages, since the hand of the Lord thrust us into space and separated, we have traversed the world from pole to pole! How many times have we been present at the waking of nature with feelings of incurable grief! Alas! it was another day to wander in from sunrise to sunset — another day uselessly added to our days, of which it in vain increased the number since death perpetually fled us."

"But, oh, what bliss! For some time, my brother, the Lord, in his pity, has willed that for us, as well as his other creatures, each day shall bring us nearer to the tomb! Glory to him! Glory to him!"

"Glory to him! my sister; for since yesterday, when his will was worked in us, I feel that languor so indescribable, but which must be caused by the approaches of death."

"I am like you, my brother, and have also felt my strength fail me, and gradually weaken in a sweet exhaustion. No doubt the end of our life approaches. The anger of the Lord is appeased."

"Alas! my sister, no doubt the last member of my ill-fated race will, by his death, now near at hand, achieve my pardon; for the will of God is at length manifested. I shall be pardoned when the last of my race shall have disappeared from the earth. For him, holy amongst the most holy, was reserved the power of accomplishing my ransom — he who has done so much for his brethren."

"Ah, yes, my brother, he who has suffered so much; he who without complaining has emptied cups so bitter,

born crosses so heavy; he who, a minister of the Lord, has been the image of Christ on earth, — he will be the last instrument of this pardon."

"Yes; for I feel that at this hour, my sister, the last of my race, the exemplary victim of a slow persecution, is on the point of rendering up his angelic soul to God. Thus, even to the very end, I shall have been fatal to my race thus cursed. Lord, Lord, if thy clemency is great, thine anger has been great also!"

"Courage and hope, my brother; think that after expiation comes pardon, after pardon, reward. The Lord has smitten in you and in your posterity the artisan, rendered wicked by misfortune and injustice, when he said to you, 'Onwards, onwards, without cessation or repose; and your journeying shall be vain; and every evening, when throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer your end than you were in the morning, when you again began your eternal course.' Thus for ages pitiless men have said to the artisan, 'Work, work, work, without cessation or repose, and your labour, fruitful for all, shall be sterile for yourself; and every evening, when throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer the attainment of happiness and repose than you were on the preceding evening, when you returned from your daily labour. Your wages will suffice to keep you in an existence of grief, privation, and misery.'"

"Alas, alas! will it be always thus?"

"No, no, my brother, instead of weeping over those of your race, rejoice over them; for if the Lord has required their death for your pardon, the Lord, redeeming in you the artisan accursed by Heaven, will also redeem, cursed and feared by those who bow him down beneath a yoke of iron. In truth, my brother, the time is at hand, the time is at hand! The mercy of the Lord will not be limited to us only. Yes, I tell you, in us are ransomed women and the slave of the day. The

trial has been cruel, brother; for eighteen centuries it has endured; but it has endured long enough. See, my brother, see in the east that rosy light which gradually reaches — reaches to the firmament. There will speedily arise the sun of a new emancipation, — an emancipation pacific, holy, great, salutary, productive, which will spread over the world its brightness and heat, vivifying even as the day-star, which will soon blaze resplendent in the heavens."

"Yes, yes, my sister, I feel this; your words are prophetic. Yes, we shall close our wearied eyes, having at least seen the aurora of the day of deliverance, — a day as splendid, glorious, as that which is about to arise. Ah, no, no; I have no longer any tears but those of pride and glorification for those of my race, who have died perchance to assure this redemption. Holy martyrs of humanity, sacrificed by the eternal enemies of humanity, — for the ancestry of these sacrilegious men, who blaspheme the holy name of Jesus in giving it to their Company, were the Pharisees, the false and unworthy priests, whom Christ has cursed. Yes, glory to the descendants of my race, for having been the last martyrs immolated by these accomplices in all slavery, all despotism — by these pitiless enemies of the freedom of those who would think, and would not suffer, — of those who would enjoy as sons of God the gifts which the Creator has shed upon the whole of his vast human family. Yes, yes, it is at hand, the end of the reign of those modern Pharisees, those false priests, who lend a sacrilegious support to the pitiable and pitiless selfishness of the strong against the weak, by daring to maintain, in the face of the inexhaustible treasures of the creation, that God has made man for tears, misfortune, and misery. These false priests, who, the favourers of all oppressions, desire always to bow to the very earth the forehead of the created being in humiliation, wretchedness, and ignorance. But, no, let

him boldly raise his head. God created man to be worthy, intelligent, free, and happy."

"Oh, my brother, your words are also prophetic. Yes, yes, the dawn of this glorious day approaches,—approaches as the rising of this day, which, by the mercy of God, will be the last of our terrestrial life."

"The last, my sister; for some indescribable weakness gains fast upon me; it seems as though all within me that is material is dissolving away, and I feel deep aspirations of my soul, which seems to long for heaven."

"My brother, my eyes are closing, and I can scarcely see through my half veiled lids the east with its dawn of rosy light."

"Sister, I can scarcely see the valley, the lake, the woods, through a dim vapour; my strength is leaving me."

"Brother, God be blessed, the moment of our eternal repose is at hand."

"Yes, it comes, sister; the happiness of eternal sleep seizes on all my senses."

"Oh, happiness, brother, I die."

"Sister, my eyes close — pardoned — pardoned."

"Yes, brother, and may this divine redemption extend over all — those who suffer — on earth."

"Die in peace, my sister — the dawn of this great day — is — near — the sun has arisen — behold it!"

"Oh, God be blessed!"

"Oh, God be blessed!"

And at the moment when these two voices ceased for ever, the sun shone forth in its dazzling radiance, and inundated the valley with its rays.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### CONCLUSION.

Our task is done — our work is ended. We well know how incomplete, imperfect, is this production. We know all that it wants in style, conception, and story. But we believe we have the right to say that this work is honest, conscientious, and sincere.

During the progress of the publication many hateful, unjust, and fierce attacks have assailed it; many severe and hard criticisms, many earnest but frank criticisms, have hailed it. The hateful, unjust, and fierce attacks have diverted us — we confess it in all humility — inasmuch as they have been directed against us from certain episcopal pulpits. These amusing displays of anger, these anathematising buffooneries, have been thundered forth against us for more than a year. They are too amusing to be disliked. It is simply the high comedy of clerical manners. We have enjoyed — very much enjoyed — this comedy. We have tasted and relished it; and it is right that we should express our sincere gratitude to those who, like the divine Molière, are both authors of and actors in it.

As to the violent, bitter critiques, we accept them freely and gratefully, as far as they relate to the literary portion of our work, and profit by the advice given to us, although, perhaps, somewhat sharply. Our humble deference to the opinion of the most judicious, and more correct than kind, of sympathising friends has, we fear, somewhat disconcerted and annoyed them; and this we

doubly regret, for we have profited by their criticism; and it is involuntary on our part if we displease those who have rendered us a service, although unintentional on their part.

A few words on other but graver attacks. We have been accused of having appealed to the passions, by marking out for public animadversion the members of the Company of Jesus. This is our answer: There is no longer any doubt — it is incontestable — it is demonstrated by texts submitted to evidence of the most opposite character, from Pascal to our days, that the theological works of the best accredited members of the Company of Jesus contain justification or excuse for —

THEFT — ADULTERY — VIOLATION — MURDER

It is also undeniable that foul and revolting works, signed by the reverend fathers of the Company of Jesus, have been more than once placed in the hands of the youth of their seminaries.

This last fact established, demonstrated by a scrupulous examination of texts, having been, besides, solemnly and lately exposed in an oration full of high feelings, reasoning, and serious and noble eloquence, by M. l'Avocat-Général Dupoty, during the proceedings of the learned and honourable M. Busch, of Strasbourg, what has been our proceeding? We have imagined members of the Company of Jesus, inspired by the detestable principles of their theologian classics, and acting according to the spirit and letter of these abominable works, their catechism and rudiments, — we have, in fact, put in action, in relief, in flesh and blood, these detestable doctrines, nothing more — nothing less.

Have we pretended that all the members of the Society of Jesus had the black art, the audacity, or the wickedness to employ those dangerous arms which are contained in the dark arsenal of their Order? By

no means. What we have attacked is the abominable spirit of the constitution of the Company of Jesus, the books of their classic theologians.

Is there any need to add that, since popes, kings, nations, and latterly France, have shown their disgust for the horrible doctrines of this Company by expelling its members or dissolving their congregation, we have done no more than present, under a new form, ideas, convictions, and facts, for a long while consecrated and of public notoriety?

This stated, we pass on to the next point.

We have been reproached, also, with exciting the hatred of the poor against the rich; of envenoming the envy which the unfortunate feels at the sight of the splendours of wealth.

To this we reply that we have, on the contrary, endeavoured, in the creation of Adrienne de Cardoville, to personify that portion of the aristocracy, by name and fortune, which, as much from a noble and generous impulse as by a knowledge of the past and forecast for the future, extends, or endeavours to extend, a benevolent and fraternal hand to all who suffer, to all who preserve their honesty in their distress, and to all that labour renders worthy. Is it, in a word, to sow the germs of division between the rich and poor when we exhibit Adrienne de Cardoville, the handsome and wealthy patrician, calling La Mayeux her sister, and treating her as a sister, when she is a poor, wretched, deformed sempstress?

Is it to irritate the workman against his employer, to show M. François Hardy laying the first foundation of a *maison commune?*

No; we have, on the contrary, endeavoured to effect a union, a reconciliation between the two classes placed at the two extremities of the social ladder, for during three years we have written these words, If the rich only knew!

We have said, and we repeat, that there are frightful and innumerable miseries, against which the masses — better and better informed as to their rights, but still calm, patient, resigned — demand protection. They require that those who govern should at length occupy themselves with the amelioration of their deplorable position, each day aggravated by anarchy and the pitiless rivalry which prevail in commerce. Yes, we have said, and we repeat, that the honest and industrious workman has a right to a labour which shall give him adequate wages.

Let us sum up in a few lines the questions raised by us in this work.

We have endeavoured to prove the cruel deficiency of women's wages, and the horrible consequences of this deficiency.

We have demanded fresh securities against the facility with which any person may be shut up in a lunatic asylum.

We have demanded that the artisan should enjoy the benefit of the law with respect to liberty on payment of caution money, — caution reaching the amount of five hundred francs, a sum impossible for him to acquire, whilst liberty is more important to him than to any other person, as his family often lives on his sole industry, which he cannot exercise in gaol. We have, therefore, proposed the sum of sixty or eighty francs, as nearly representing the amount of a month's labour.

We have, in fine, by endeavouring to render practical the organisation of a *maison commune* for work-people, demonstrated (at least we hope so) the immense advantages, even at the present ratio of wages, insufficient as it is, work-people would find in the principle of association and living in common, if the means of achieving such a result were afforded them.

And in order that this might not be treated as a utopianism, we have established, by figures, that specu-

lators might do at the same time a humane and a generous action, profitable to all, and gain five per cent. for their money, by founding common houses.

A humane and generous speculation we have also recommended to the attention of the Municipal Council, always so full of solicitude for the Parisian population. The city of Paris is rich, and in no way could it dispose of some of its capital more advantageously than in establishing in some quarter of the capital a model *maison commune*. In the first place, the hope of being admitted there for a moderate sum would excite a praiseworthy emulation amongst the working classes; and in the next, they would draw from this example the first and most powerful rudiments of association.

Now one last word to thank, from the depths of our heart, the friends, known and unknown, whose benevolence, encouragement, and sympathy have constantly followed us, and have been to us of such powerful aid in our long task.

One other word, also, of respectful and unfailing gratitude for our friends in Belgium and Switzerland, who have deigned to give us public proofs of their sympathy, which will always be to us a source of satisfaction, and one of our sweetest rewards.

THE END.

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